Hitler's Eastern Legions 1942–45

NIGEL THOMAS PhD

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHNNY SHUMATE

ELITE • 233

Hitler's Eastern Legions
1942–1945

NIGEL THOMAS PhD

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHNNY SHUMATE

Series editors Martin Windrow & Nick Reynolds

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 4

GERMAN INTELLIGENCE IN THE CAUCASUS 4
'Bergmann' Special Unit ▪ Intelligence Operation 'Tiger B' ▪ Operation 'Zeppelin'

THE EASTERN LEGIONS: OVERVIEW 8
Eastern Legions Formation HQ ▪ 162nd Infantry Division Training Staff ▪ Unit organization Muslim priests ▪ Specialist sub-units ▪ Re-assignment of units ▪ Transfer to the West Turkestan & Caucasian Waffen-SS: East Turkic Armed Unit – Caucasian Armed Unit

UNIFORMS & INSIGNIA: OVERVIEW 17
Headgear ▪ Uniforms & personal equipment ▪ Rank insignia ▪ National emblem ▪ Legion cockades Legion identifying colours ▪ Arm shields ▪ Unit insignia ▪ Medals ▪ Waffen-SS units

THE EASTERN LEGIONS: PROFILES 26
Turkestan Legion: background – population – organization – distinctive insignia ▪ Azerbaijan Legion: background – population – organization – distinctive insignia ▪ Georgian Legion: background – population – organization – distinctive insignia ▪ Armenian Legion: background & population – organization – distinctive insignia ▪ North Caucasus Legion: background – populations – organization – distinctive insignia ▪ Volga-Tatar Legion: background & population – organization – distinctive insignia

CAMPAIGN DEPLOYMENTS 44
Overview: Caucasus campaign, June–December 1942 ▪ Eastern Legions: the Caucasus, Kalmykia & Stalingrad, June 1942–February 1943 ▪ Crimea, Ukraine & southern Russia, January 1943–April 1944 Central & northern Russia, Belarus, Poland & Slovakia, February 1943–October 1944 ▪ Northern Europe, February 1943–December 1944 ▪ Southern Europe, February 1943–December 1944 January–May 1945

CRIMEAN TATAR FORCES 51
Background & population ▪ The war in Crimea ▪ Crimean Tatar village militia, October–December 1941 ▪ Self-Defence companies, January–July 1942 ▪ Auxiliary Police, October 1942–Mar 1944 Waffen-SS units, Mar 1944–May 1945

KALMYK FORCES 56
Background & population ▪ Organization & campaigns: October 1942–July 1943; August 1943–April 1945 ▪ Uniforms & insignia

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY 59

CHARTS 60

INDEX 64

HITLER'S EASTERN LEGIONS 1942–1945

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the military organizations formed and deployed by the German Army between January 1942 and May 1945 from inhabitants of Turkestan, the Caucasus, the River Volga region and the Crimean peninsula, as well as German intelligence units formed from October 1941 for the 1942 Caucasus campaign, and units later raised by the SS in Turkestan, the Caucasus and Crimea.

German intelligence in the Caucasus:'Bergmann' Special Unit

Anticipating the 1942 Caucasus campaign, II Foreign Department of Military Intelligence (*Amt Ausland/Abwehr II*) organized from 14 Oct 1941 at Neuhammer, Silesia (now Świętoszów, Poland) the motorized Special Unit 'Highlander' (*Sonderverband 'Bergmann'*), under Oblt Theodor Oberländer. This planned to recruit Caucasian volunteers, emigrés, Red Army deserters and prisoners-of-war, to occupy the 7,815-foot Cross Pass between Tbilisi (Georgia) and Ordzhonikidze, thus securing a passage for German troops through the mountains to the southern Caucasus area. The 1,200-strong battalion was formed in Dec 1941 with 5 companies: 1st (Georgian), 2nd (North Caucasian), 3rd (Azerbaijan), 4th (North Caucasian) and 5th (Georgian and Armenian), totalling 900 Caucasians of all ranks with a 300-strong German cadre, including some 'Brandenburg' commandos.

In Jan 1942 'Bergmann' transferred to Mittenwald, Bavaria for mountain training, and on 29 July 1942 entrained for the Caucasus as a mountain infantry unit. It fought from 12 Aug 1942 with 1st Panzer Army in the Malka valley east of Mozdok, and by 25 Aug had reached Pyatigorsk, but the Cross Pass was beyond its reach. Thereafter 'Bergmann' operated as independent companies attached to German divisions, including parachuting volunteers behind enemy lines to persuade Red Army Caucasian troops to desert. On 29 Sept 1942 the 2,800-strong regt expanded to 14 sub-units averaging 200 men each: 6th & 9th (North Caucasian) Cav Sqns, 7th & 8th (North Caucasian)

A *Stellvertretender Zugführer* (equivalent to sergeant) of the Armenian Legion writes up some notes, 1943. His field-grey M1943 field cap shows no eagle or cockade badges. His 6-button M1941 tunic has a dark bluish-green customized collar, M1940 mouse-grey woven breast eagle, and coloured legion arm shield. The M1942 (type 2) rank insignia comprise dark bluish-green collar patches piped with the Armenian Legion's golden-yellow distinctive colour and displaying silver NCO braid, and field-grey shoulder straps with golden-yellow piping and transverse NCO braid rank bars. (Tchakov Collection)

Cos, 10th (Georgian) Co, 11th (Azerbaijan) Co, 12th (Georgian) Cav Sqn, 13th (mixed) Training Co, and HQ Engineer Ptn (*S-Zug*).

On 11 Jan 1943 'Bergmann', reorganized as a conventional infantry regt, retreated from the Caucasus, and from Feb 1943 fought Soviet partisans in the Crimea. In Mar 1943 it absorbed Maj Dr Friedrich Baumhauer's 270-strong 1st Caucasian Air Force Field Bn (*I Kaukasische Lufwaffen-Feldbataillon*). On 1 Aug 1943 'Bergmann' was divided into 2 cav sqns and 3 inf bns, to fight as independent bns, while the now politically suspect Oberländer was placed under SS house arrest in Prague.

I (Georgian) 'Bergmann' Bn (1–4 Cos, Cav Sqn) – formerly 800 (North Caucasian) Inf Bn – guarded the northern Crimea; in mid-Oct 1943 it retreated to the Perekop peninsula, which it defended 30 Oct–4 Nov. In early 1944 the bn was evacuated by sea to Rumania and then by train to Athens, before retreating from Oct 1944 into Serbia. The bn surrendered to British forces on 14 May 1945 at Cilli (now Celje, Slovenia), but was handed over to an uncertain fate at the hands of Tito's Yugoslav forces.

An Azerbaijan volunteer named Havibakshiy serving with II 'Bergmann' Bn, photographed in southern Ukraine during 1943. He wears an M1939 field-grey mountain troops' cap, identifiable by its shorter peak than that of the M1943 *Einheits*- or 'universal' field cap. Hardly visible above the front of the 2-button flap are the German Army M1940 mouse-grey woven eagle-and-swastika national emblem above a German tricolour cockade, but evident on the left side is the unofficial 'Bergmann' white-and-black metal dagger badge. He wears the all field-grey 5-button M1940 tunic with enlisted ranks' mouse-grey woven collar braids, and on his right breast the M1935 silver-grey national emblem machine-woven on dark bluish-green backing. (Author's collection)

II (Azerbaijan) 'Bergmann' Bn (5–8 Cos) guarded southern Crimea, but from mid-Oct 1943 retreated to Perekop and Kherson, reaching Rumania in May 1944. In June 1944 the bn transferred to France, but in July diverted to Frankfurt an der Oder. It fought Polish Home Army (AK) guerrillas 1 Aug–3 Sept 1944 during the Warsaw Uprising, then defended the Vistula Line under 4th Pz Army in Oct 1944. It retreated to Neuhammer in Jan 1945, reaching Cottbus in Mar and Aalborg, Denmark in Apr, surrendering to British forces in northern Germany in May 1945.

The combat record of III (North Caucasian) 'Bergmann' Bn (9 & 10 Cos, 12 MG Co, Cav Sqn; 11 Armenian Co) matched that of I Bn. First based in Sevastopol, it then defended Perekop 30 Oct–4 Nov 1943, being shipped out to Rumania on 17 Apr 1944. It reached Athens in May, where it joined the general retreat northwards, reaching Thessaly in Aug 1944. In Feb 1945 it supported German and Croatian forces against Yugoslav partisans in Bosnia. III Bn surrendered to the British in Austria on 13 May, five days after VE-Day, only to be transferred to GenLt von Panwitz's XV Cossack Cav Corps and ultimately handed over with them to Soviet NKVD security troops.[1]

Intelligence Operation 'Tiger B'

This unit (*Abwehrunternehmen 'Tiger B'*), 'Bergmann's' sister unit, was formed on 18 Oct 1941 at Rembertów Training Camp (now a suburb of Warsaw) for service behind Red Army lines in the Caucasus. It comprised 21 platoon-level *Kommandos* and over 70 Abwehr section-sized *Trupps*.

1 See the author's MAA 503, *Hitler's Russian and Cossack Allies 1941–45*.

Azerbaijan members of II 'Bergmann' Bn relax during a lull in the fighting against the Warsaw Uprising, Aug 1944. Most wear M1943 peaked (visored) field caps, and 6-button M1942 field-grey uniforms with M1944 German rank insignia, though the right-hand man seems to have an M1942 reed-green twill summer tunic. The man lighting his comrade's cigarette (second from right, rear) has the dagger badge on his cap; the soldier sitting in front of him still has an M1934 field cap, which shows the German cockade. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 1011-695-0425-39/Leher/CC-BY-SA 3.0)

under German 'Brandenburg' commando officers, commanded by Abwehr Maj Andreas Meyer-Mader. After training in irregular warfare until 13 Jan 1942, the unit was reorganized as the Turkestan-Caucasian-Muslim Legion (see below).

Operation 'Zeppelin'

Unternehmen 'Zeppelin' was established in 1942 by SS-Brigaf Walther Schellenburg of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA), the National Security Head Office of the SS. In summer 1942, 'Zeppelin' formed the Caucasus Special HQ (*Sonderstab Kaukasus*), to conduct intelligence-gathering, propaganda and guerrilla missions behind enemy lines in North Caucasus using Azerbaijan Legion personnel. By May 1945, Caucasus Special HQ had sent 348 operatives behind Soviet lines, most of whom were captured by the NKVD.

A

'BERGMANN' SPECIAL UNIT

(1) *Gefreiter*; Pyatigorsk, Caucasus, September 1942

This Georgian member of a rifle section advancing in the Caucasus wears standard Army uniform, including the M1940 field-grey tunic with infantry-white shoulder strap piping, mouse-grey collar braids and left-sleeve rank chevron. The unit is identified by the silver-and-black metal dagger badge on the left side of his Caucasian *kubanka* lambswool cap. He has the standard-issue Karabiner 98k rifle, with M1933 ammunition pouches, and carries an M1938 anti-gas cape bag on his chest on the sling of the gasmask canister hanging behind him.

(2) *Leutnant*, I 'Bergmann' Battalion; Crimea, January 1943

The Georgian platoon commander 2nd Lt Tashvili wears the M1936 field-grey mountain troops' uniform. His short-peaked (visored) mountain cap has officers' silver (aluminium)-wire crown-seam piping, and the Bergmann dagger on the left side. The enlisted ranks' tunic has standard M1938 collar braids on the dark bluish-green collar; the M1935 silver-wire breast eagle favoured by officers; grass-green Waffenfarbe branch-colour shoulder-strap underlay; and on the left pocket the M1939 black Wound Badge for either one or two wounds. His M1936 mountain trousers are confined by ankle puttees above climbing boots. He carries a Luger P08 pistol with hardshell holster on his M1938 officers' belt, and Zeiß short binoculars.

(3) *Major*, 1st Caucasian Air Force Field Bn; Crimea, September 1943

The battalion commander Maj Baumhauer wears M1935 Luftwaffe officers' uniform, with an M1943 'universal' field cap with officers' silver crown-piping. His insignia show the red branch-colour of the *Flakartillerie*, and the Bergmann dagger badge pinned unofficially to his left collar patch. In addition to the P08 pistol, he carries an M1935 map-case.

3
2
1

THE EASTERN LEGIONS: OVERVIEW

Operation 'Barbarossa', the German invasion of the Soviet Union, was launched on 22 June 1941. Army Groups North, Centre and South planned to advance to occupy Leningrad (now St Petersburg), Moscow and Stalingrad (now Volgograd) respectively, before halting on the Archangel–Astrakhan ('A–A') Line after a 1,400-mile advance in just 42 days. While making huge advances and destroying many Soviet armies, the Wehrmacht failed to capture any of these ambitious objectives. From 5 Dec 1941 Army Groups North and Centre began to retreat before the Soviet winter counter-offensive, with only Army Group South absorbing the enemy pressure with reasonable success.

Meanwhile, successful enlistment of Slavic 'volunteer auxiliaries' (*Hilfswillige*) encouraged GenMaj Edouard Wagner, Deputy Chief of General Staff at Army High Command (OKH), to propose on 17 Dec 1941 the formation of conventional units from Caucasian ethnic minorities. In time, a total of 104 such 'Eastern Legion' bns would be planned. Of these, 82 were completed and saw action, thus making an important contribution to the German war effort.

Ukraine, 1943: GenLt Heinz Hellmich, Inspector of Eastern Troops (*Inspekteur der Osttruppen*) 15 Dec 1942–31 Dec 1943, kneels beside a Turkestan legionary operating an M1936 5cm light mortar. The legionary is wearing a field-grey M1942 field cap bearing the German eagle badge above a Turkestan Legion painted metal cockade, but in combination with the greenish-brown M1940 cotton twill tropical uniform with mouse-grey insignia woven on light brown backing. (Author's collection)

Eastern Legions Formation HQ

Six Legions were formed in the Government-General (*General-Gouvernement,* i.e. occupied Poland) during 1942, to train and embody battalions of Turkic, Caucasian and Volga personnel gathered from prisoner-of-war camps. (While their motives for enlistment may have included anti-Soviet resentment, it should be borne in mind that their conditions of captivity were such that the great majority of Red Army prisoners in German hands died of starvation, neglect, exhaustion or brutality.)

(1) The Turkestan-Caucasian-Muslim Legion was formed on 13 Jan 1942, and redesignated Turkestan Legion on 24 Mar 1942.

(2) The Caucasian Muslim Legion was formed on 24 Mar 1942, and redesignated Azerbaijan Legion on 22 July 1942.

(3) The Georgian Legion was authorized on 30 Dec 1941, but not actually formed until 24 Feb 1942.

(4) The Armenian Legion was authorized on 30 Dec 1941, but not actually formed until 4 July 1942.

(5) The North Caucasian Legion was formed on 22 July 1942 (but from 1943 wore a badge bearing the title 'Caucasian Mountain').

(6) The Volga-Tatar Legion was formed on 25 Nov 1942.

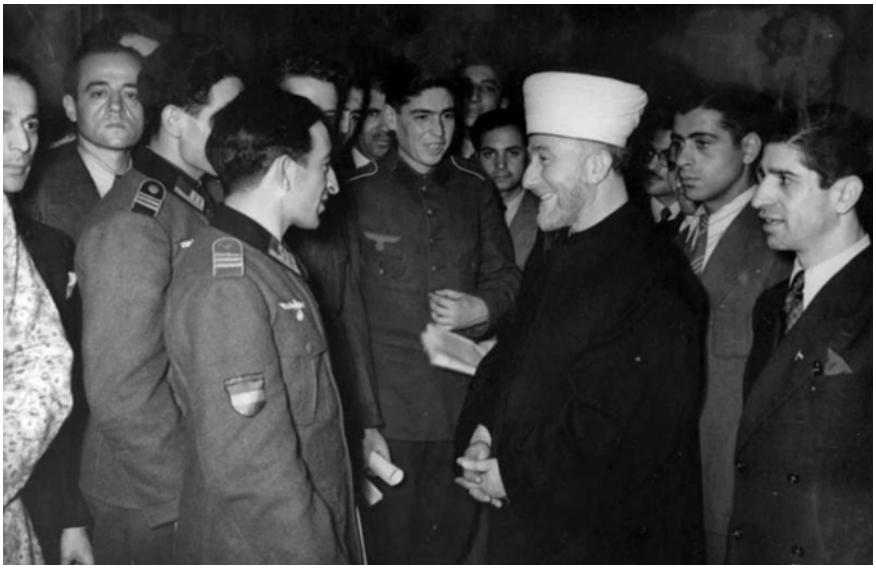
From 18 Feb 1942, the Legions were commanded by the Eastern Legions Formation HQ (*Aufstellungsstab der Ostlegionen*) at Rembertów (summer 1942, Radom) in occupied Poland, redesignated from 23 Jan 1943 Eastern Legions Command (*Kommando der Ostlegionen*). From 16 Aug 1942, the Formation HQ trained troops for Army Groups North and Centre. The HQ's commander was Gen Ernst-August Köstring, the Wehrmacht's foremost Russian expert. On 1 Sept 1942, Köstring was appointed Commissioner for Caucasus Questions; in June 1943, Inspector of Turkic Units, responsible for the Eastern Legions; and on 1 Jan 1944, General of Volunteer Units, covering all ex-Soviet troops.

An Eastern legionary unloads a wicker transport crate holding artillery shells. He displays German insignia on his M1934 field-grey field cap, but none of any kind on the M1933 off-white twill fatigue uniform, worn with M1939 enlisted ranks' short-shaft marching boots. (Author's collection)

The first autonomous Eastern Legion Inf Bn (*Infanteriebataillon*) was 450th Reinforced Turkestan Inf Bn, formed 24 Mar 1942 and commanded by Maj Mayer-Mader. Subsequently a total of 64 independent Eastern Legion inf bns were formed or planned, numbered 450, 452, 627, & 781–843. Some bns were given unofficial titles commemorating historic personalities or boasting heroic qualities, such as 798 'King Erekle II Bagrationi' Georgian Inf Bn, or 804 'Aslan' (Lion) Azerbaijan Bn. The last-raised unit which definitely saw action was 841 Turkestan Inf Bn, formed on 1 Sept 1943, although attempts to form further independent units continued until that December.

162nd Infantry Division Training Staff

In early 1942, the OKH decided to establish in Ukraine a second training facility for Turkic and Caucasian POWs joining the Eastern Legions. On 18 May 1942, the HQ of the disbanded 162nd Infantry Division was



Berlin, Dec 1942: Mohammad Amin al-Husayni, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, meets soldiers of the Azerbaijan Legion. The senior Sunni Muslim cleric under the British Mandate in Palestine, al-Husayni was a fervently pro-Nazi Arab nationalist. The NCOs (left) wear M1940 tunics with non-regulation dark bluish-green collars and the M1942 (type 2) insignia (see Chart 3) of the sergeant-equivalent rank of *Stellvertretender Zugführer.* The foreground man displays the legion's M1942 arm shield, and an officer-quality silver (aluminium-thread) embroidered breast eagle. (Bundesarchiv_Bild 147-0483/ CC-BY-SA 3.0)

reorganized as a training staff at Mirgorod (now Myrhgorod), eastern Ukraine, commanded by GenMaj Oskar Dr Ritter von Niedermayer, a noted oriental scholar. The men were organized into 'Field Battalions', which differed only in title from the 'Infantry Battalions' formed in Poland. They were collected from transit camps (*Durchgangslager*, abbreviated *Dulag*) near Poltava – 132 (Lubny) and 160 (Chorol) – and allocated to five Legion transit camps: 137 (Romny), for Turkestan; 200 (Priliki), Azerbaijan; 112 (Gadyach, now Hadyach), Georgia; 127 (Lochvica), Armenia; 120 (Myrhgorod), North Caucasus. No Volga-Tatar Legion bns were formed in Ukraine. From 16 Aug 1942, 162nd Inf Div HQ also trained troops for Army Group South.

A field battalion (*Feldbataillon*) carried the Roman bn number I–IV, followed by the number of the German infantry, light or mountain division to which it was originally assigned. (See order-of-battle Tables 1 to 7 for

B

TURKESTAN LEGION

(1) *Kompanieführer,* 781st Infantry Bn; Tuapse, Caucasus, October 1942

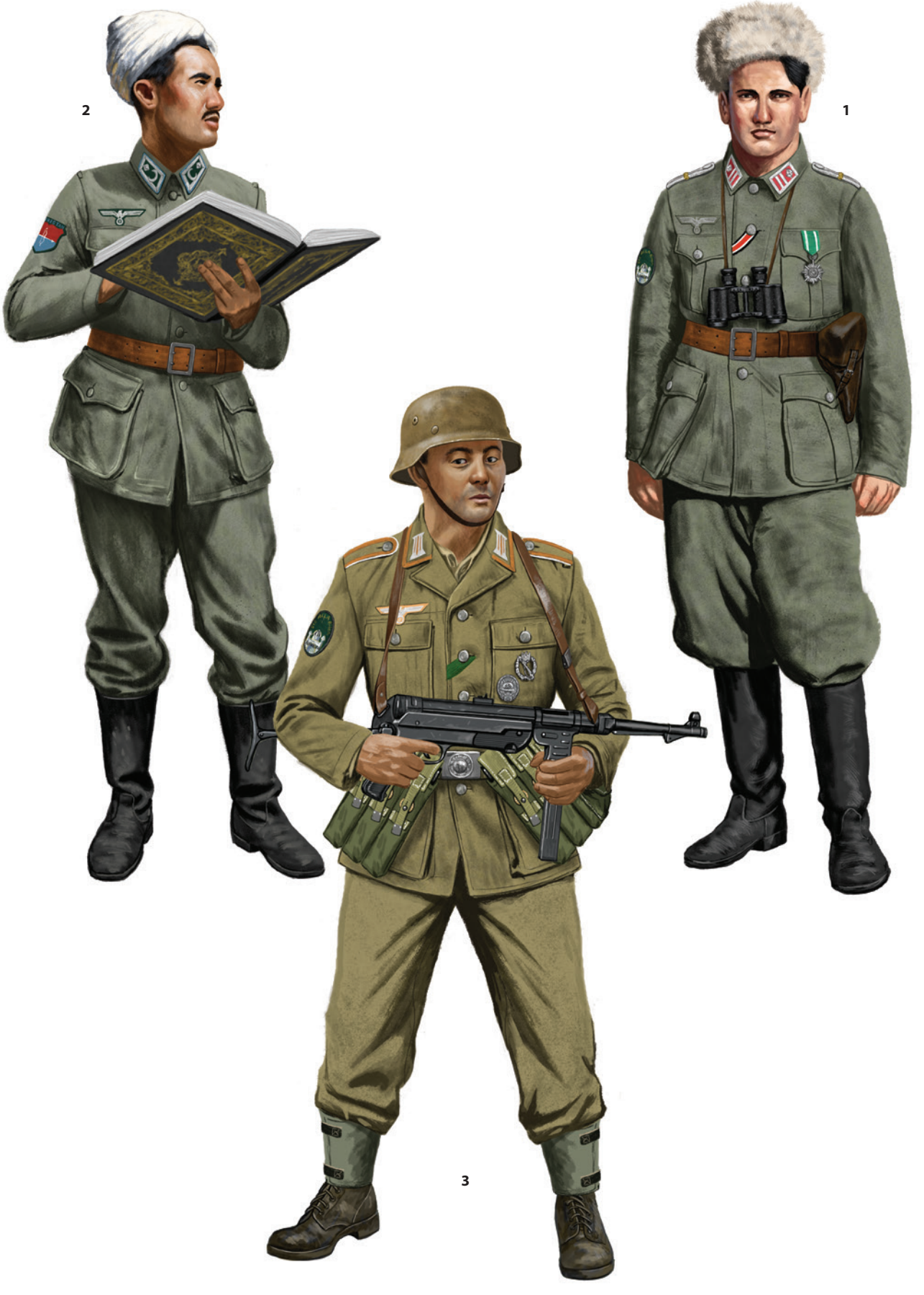
This officer, resting from the unsuccessful siege of Tuapse, wears a Caucasian fur *kubanka* and the M1940 enlisted ranks' tunic. Note the enlisted ranks' mouse-grey breast eagle; the M1942 (type 1) red Security Unit collar patches, and narrow shoulder straps with a gold wire rank knot (as Chart 2); and this Legion's first-pattern M1942 right sleeve patch (as Chart 1). He has been awarded the 1939 Iron Cross 2nd Class, and the Eastern People's Silver Gallantry Medal 2nd Class with Swords.

(2) *Bataillonsmulla*; Jedlnia, Poland, September 1943

This priest wears a Muslim turban headdress and an M1942 enlisted ranks' tunic, with an officer-quality M1935 aluminium-thread woven breast eagle but no shoulder straps. The M1942 (type 2) collar patches are dark bluish-green with silver NCOs' braid edging and this Legion's light-blue piping, and display single German rank stars behind opposed silver crescents. His arm shield is the M1943. His uniform is completed by an officer's M1938 belt, but M1940 enlisted ranks' field-grey trousers and M1939 short-shaft marching boots.

(3) *Unter-ofitser*, III/359th Grenadier Regiment; Montenegro, September 1944

This junior NCO wears the M1940 greenish-tan tropical uniform permitted in the heat of the Balkan summer, with M1943 tunic, and a tan-painted M1935 helmet. His breast eagle and collar braids are mouse-grey, woven on light-brown backing; his collar and shoulder straps are edged with light-brown NCOs' *Tresse* braid, and the straps are piped infantry-white. From Mar 1944, the Eastern Legions were authorized German rank insignia and only the M1944 arm patch identifies his nationality. He displays the silver M1939 Wound Badge for three or four wounds, the M1939 Infantry Assault Badge for three attacks, and the plain green buttonhole-ribbon of the Eastern People's Bronze Medal 2nd Class. As a section commander, he carries an MP 40 sub-machine gun, with its canvas magazine pouches.


2
1
3

France, Oct 1943: a German officer on the cadre of 782nd Infantry Bn, Turkestan Legion (note M1942 arm patch) uses a 'sand-table' model to instruct officers and NCOs in tactics. Most of his audience wear M1942 field caps and M1940 tunics with M1942 (type 2) rank insignia, but the NCO at the corner of the table has a paler grey-green M1912 Royal Netherlands Army 7-button tunic. Such expedient use of captured clothing was common in the legions. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-295-1561-04/Müller, Karl/CC-BY-SA 3)

details.) The 162nd Inf Div HQ formed 1 & 2 Turkestan Legion Regt HQs and 38 field bns between 4 Aug 1942 and 17 Jan 1943 (also II/76, 2 Apr 1943): I/1 (Mtn), I & II/4 (Mtn), I–III/9, I/25, I/29, I/44, I/50, I/71, I–III/73, I/76, III/76, I/79, I/94, I/97 (Lt), I/100 (Lt), I & IV/101 (Lt), I/111, I/113, I & II/125, I & II/198, I/295, I/297, I/298, I/305, I/370, I/371, I/376, I/384 and I/389. These bns were intended for the Caucasus campaign, and were allocated to the Turkestan, Azerbaijan, Georgian and Armenian (but not North Caucasus or Volga-Tatar) Legions. The first field bn was I/370 Turkestan, formed summer 1942, and the last II/76 Turkestan, set up on 2 April 1943.

Unit organization

The largest Eastern Legion unit was the 824-strong infantry battalion. This comprised an HQ (76 men), HQ & Anti-Tank Co (138), 3 x Inf Cos (138 each) and an MG Co (258). An inf co had an HQ ptn; anti-tank, eng, mortar and sigs ptns, and 3 rifle ptns. However, this HQ cadre level proved unsustainable, and was later reduced to 37 men – 4 German officers, 1 paymaster, 1 *Sonderführer (Z)*, 6 *Sonderführer (G)*, 15 NCOs and 10 men – and was often even smaller, allowing few command appointments for legionaries.

Muslim priests

On 27 Aug 1942, two senior mullahs (*Obermullas*) on the 162nd Inf Div staff persuaded the div commander to appoint priests to Turkestan and Azerbaijan units. There were initially three grades: (1) *Divisionsmulla* – ranking as *Kompanieführer* (abolished Jan 1943); (2) *Legionsmulla*

Legionaries may be hard to distinguish in photographs. Although wearing entirely German Army uniforms and insignia, these four soldiers probing for landmines on a path through a Ukrainian forest at some date during 1943 are in fact from one of the Eastern Legions. (Author's collection)

– ranking as *Kompanieführer*; and (3) *Bataillonsmulla* – ranking as *Zugführer*. When the 162nd Inf Div training staff reorganized as a German-Turkestan inf div, ranks were simplified to two: *Regimentsmulla*, and *Bataillonsmulla* (Inf) or *Abteilungsmulla* (Arty). From Apr 1944 a *Kompaniemulla* ranking as *Gruppenführer/Unter-ofitser* was appointed to all companies.

Specialist sub-units

A large number of mainly company-level combat support sub-units were also formed within the Eastern Legions. For lack of space, the following list is not exhaustive, but is indicative: 6 Guard (*Wache*) Cos; 3 Field (*Feld*) Cos; 2 Ordnance (*Feldzeug*) Bns; 4 Labour (*Arbeit*) Bns; 82 Construction (*Bau*) Cos; 1 Road Construction (*Straßenbau*) Co; 2 Construction Eng (*Baupionier*) Bns; 22 Construction Eng (*Baupionier*) Cos; 5 Railway (*Eisenbahn*) Construction Cos; 2 Railway Bridge (*Eisenbahnbrücken*) Construction Cos; 65 Supply (*Nachschub*) Cos; and 8 Pack Supply Columns.

Re-assignment of units

The Eastern Legion infantry or field bn was a flexible unit which was often re-assigned or converted. Thus, it might be posted to a Grenadier Regt; e.g. 781 Turkestan Inf Bn, which became I/731 Gren Regt in Apr 1944, only to revert to its original title when redeployed as an independent bn that July. Some mediocre units on static infantry duties guarding coastal defences were assigned as Fortress Grenadier *(Festunggrenadier)* bns to Fortress Gren regiments. Some, such as the 246th Turkestan, were even re-assigned as field artillery. It was common for inf or field bns which had suffered high casualties, or had not performed well, to be demoted to Construction Engineer Battalions. (See order-of-battle Tables 1 to 7 for specific examples.)

TRANSFER TO THE WEST

Following the German 6th Army's defeat at Stalingrad in Feb 1943, the Eastern Legions joined the general retreat north-westwards from the Caucasus to Crimea and southern Ukraine, and from central Russia to Belarus. On 21 May 1943 the 162nd Inf Div 'Training Staff for Foreign Volunteers' was re-formed as the 162nd (Turkestan) Inf Div, with three Grenadier regts formed from Turkestan and Azerbaijan field bns; it was transferred to occupied Poland, and later to northern Italy.

Although the Eastern Legions generally performed well and were praised by German commanders, Hitler was concerned that they might become dangerously unreliable if fighting in eastern Europe, increasingly distant from the homelands which they had joined the German Army to liberate.

Table 1: Eastern Legion formations, regiments & Waffen-SS units, 21 May 1943–8 May 1945

162 Turkestan Inf Div (r. Jedlnia, Poland, 21.5.1943); Liguria, NW Italy (1.1944); Rimini, NE Italy (8.1944); Liguria, NW Italy (12.1944); Bologna, NE Italy (3.1945): surrendered (Austria, 8.5.1945).

- I/303 Gren Regt (ex-I/44 Turkestan Field Bn); II/303 Gren Regt (ex-I/297 Turkestan Field Bn); III/303 Gren Regt (ex-I/384 Turkestan Field Bn); I/29 Turkestan Field Bn.

- I/314 Gren Regt (ex-I/4 (Mtn) Azerbaijan Field Bn); II/314 Gren Regt (ex-I/97 (Lt) Azerbaijan Field Bn); III/314 Gren Regt (ex-I/101 (Lt) Azerbaijan Field Bn).

- I/329 Gren Regt (ex-804 Azerbaijan Field Bn); II/329 Gren Regt (ex-806 Azerbaijan Field Bn); 162 Div Bn.

- IV/236 Arty Regt (ex-I/100 (Lt).

Vol Depot Div (r. SE France, 1.2.1944; disbanded 12.1944).

- 1 Vol Depot Regt (r. Castres) for Georgian, N Caucasus and Turkestan Legions; reorganized with II/4 and I/9 Georgian Field Bns and I/370 Turkestan Field Bns (Albi, SW France, 4.1944).

- 2 Vol Depot Regt (r. Mende) for Armenian, Azerbaijan and Volga-Tatar Legions; reorganized with Azerbaijan I/73 Field Bn and 804 and 806 Inf Bns, Turkestan 162 Inf Div (4.1944).

- 162 Turkestan Replacement Regt (Bitche, E France, 24.11.1943); > 3 Vol Depot Regt (Maçon) for 162 Turkestan Inf Div; for Ukrainians (12.6.1944.)

- Turkestan Training and Depot Bde (Poland, 20.7.1944); for 162 Turkestan Replacement Regt.

1607 Gren Regt (Caucasian), (r. Aalborg, Denmark, 27.3.1945); surrendered (8.5.1945).
- I Bn = 799 Georgian Inf Bn; II Bn = 836 North Caucasian Bn; III Bn = Azerbaijan II/'Bergmann' and I/111Field Bn.

1 East Muslim SS Regt (r. Poniatowa, SE Poland, 18.12.1943); I–III Bns; > **Muslim SS-Div 'New Turkestan'** (5.5.1944); Kaposvar (8.1944); Warsaw Uprising, under 'Dirlewanger' Special Regt (8.1944); Hungary (8.1944); Myjava (8.1944), > **East Turkic Armed SS Unit** (r. 1.10.1944); Slovakia (1.3.1945); near Milan, Italy (30.4.1945).
- I & II/'Turkestan' Armed Group (ex-I and II Bns, 15.12.1944).
- I & II/'Idel-Ural' Armed Group (ex-III Bn, 15.12.1944).
- I & II/'Crimea' Armed Group (2.1945).
- I & II/'Azerbaijan' Armed Group (4.11.1944)

Tatar Mtn Regt (Crimea, 3.1944) > **Armed SS Mtn Bde (1st Tatar)** (Hungary, 8.7.1944); disbanded Hungary (1.1.1945).

Caucasian Armed SS Unit (r. Paluzza, N. Italy, 4.11.1944; surrendered 8 May 1945).
- I & II/'Armenia' Armed Group.
- I & II/'Azerbaijan' Armed Group (ex-Azerbaijan East Turkic Armed Group).
- I & II/'Georgia' Armed Group.
- I & II/'North Caucasus' Armed Group.

Ukraine, Oct 1943: Gen Hellmich inspects a parade of Volga-Tatar legionaries. The troops are wearing the M1940 greenish-brown tropical peakless field caps and uniforms popularly associated with the Africa Corps, but widely used in other hot climates. Note that they also wear captured British P37 webbing belts. (Author's collection)

Consequently, from autumn 1943, Eastern Legion inf and field bns were gradually transferred from the Russian Front to Poland and western and southern Europe – mainly to France, the British Channel Islands, Belgium and the Netherlands, Denmark and Italy. This would have the effect of isolating them, thus lessening the impact of any indiscipline.

On 1 Feb 1944, the Volunteer Depot Division (*Freiwillige-Stamm-Division*) was established in Lyon for operations against the French Resistance in south-east France. The div contained five Vol Depot regts, of which 1st Regt comprised Georgian, Turkestan and North Caucasus bns, and 2nd Regt had Armenian, Azerbaijan and Volga-Tatar units. Three other regts contained Slavs (Ukrainians, Russians and Cossacks). These Eastern Legion units fought to defend southern France against the Allied invasion from 15 Aug 1944, but were forced back to the western German frontier, where the div was disbanded in December 1944.

Meanwhile, bns based in northern and western France took the full force of the Normandy landings from 6 June 1944; Allied troops were surprised to encounter Caucasian and Turkestan troops surrendering, sometimes even assuming from their appearance that they were Japanese. Eastern legionaries retreated with German forces into western Germany, where they finally surrendered on 8 May 1945. The last major Caucasian unit was 1607 Caucasian Gren Regt, formed 27 Mar 1945 in Aalborg, Denmark, from three Eastern Legion bns (Georgian, Azerbaijan, and North Caucasus) and a 'Bergmann' battalion. Forming part of 599th Russian Bde, it saw no action before surrendering to British forces on 8 May.

In Feb 1943, the 162nd Inf Div HQ transferred from eastern Ukraine to Neuhammer Training Ground, eastern Germany. There it reorganized from

1944: Note the facial features of these Eastern legionaries of an unidentified legion, all wearing M1934 field caps with eagles and German cockades, but with a typical variety of tunics.

(Left) M1941, 5 buttons, scalloped pocket-flaps, no pocket pleats; (centre) 6-button M1942; (right) 6-button M1941, but with the second button missing. All show M1940 mouse-grey machine-woven collar braids, and two the matching breast eagle, but (centre) has a silver-grey eagle. By this date, the shoulder-strap piping followed German Army *Waffenfarbe*; it is probably red, suggesting attachment to a field artillery regiment. (Tchakov Collection)

21 May as a German-Azerbaijan-Turkestan infantry division, the 162nd (Turkic) Inf Div, with 3 (15 Aug 1944, 2) three bn regts. In Oct 1943 it transferred to northern Italy, guarding the frontiers and engaging Italian partisans. It was forced to retreat into Austria in May 1945, and surrendered to British and Yugoslav forces on 8 May. Over the same period, Eastern Legion bns in central Russia were progressively withdrawn to Belarus, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Protectorate, and in 1945 were deployed in eastern Germany, finally surrendering to the Red Army on 9 May 1945.

TURKESTAN & CAUCASIAN WAFFEN-SS

East Turkic Armed Unit[2]

Heinrich Himmler, as Chief of the SS and German Police, had been competing with the Wehrmacht to enlist non-Germans since 1940 – a contest in which he was finally successful. By Dec 1943, new Caucasian and East Turkic Waffen-SS units also existed alongside the Army's Eastern Legions in the German battle order.

On 18 Dec 1943, the 1st East Muslim SS Regt, under Maj (Jan 1944: SS-Stubaf) Mayer-Mader, was formed at Poniatowa, eastern Poland, with three Eastern Legion bns reorganized as I–III SS Bns. Without increasing personnel numbers, this 3,000-strong regt was redesignated Muslim SS-Div 'New Turkestan' (*Muselmanische SS-Division 'Neu-Turkistan'*) in May 1944; but it was reduced to a unit of 800 men when deployed in Hungary and Poland, where it fought against the Warsaw Uprising under

2 A distinction should be drawn between 'Turkish' (Türkisch/Türk-), i.e. Turks from the Anatolian peninsula, and 'Turkic' (Türkvölkisch) or 'East Turkish' (Osttürkisch), i.e. inhabitants of Turkestan, speaking languages closely related to Turkish. German sources often confuse this distinction.

the notorious Dirlewanger Special Regiment. In Oct 1944, the nominal div was renamed East Turkic Armed Unit (*Osttürkische Waffenverband*), under SS-Stubaf 'Harun-el Raschid' (born Wilhelm Hintersatz). The Unit was eventually divided into Turkestan, Idel-Ural (Volga-Tatar), Crimea and Azerbaijan Armed Groups, each *Waffengruppe* containing two bns each with five cos (HQ, heavy, and three rifle cos), with East Turkic officers up to the rank of colonel. The unit suffered from poor morale and indiscipline when fighting partisans in Slovakia, where it mutinied on 24–25 December 1944. In 1945 the unit was in northern Italy, surrendering to US forces near Milan in April 1945.

Caucasian Armed Unit

The *Kaukasische Waffenverband* was formed on 4 Nov 1944 at Paluzza in Udine province, north-east Italy – 10 miles north of the Cossack settlement at Tolmezzo. The 1,525-strong Unit was organized on the East Turkic model, with Armenian, Azerbaijan, Georgian and North Caucasus Armed Groups, each with two battalions. The commander was SS-Col of Reserve (SS-Standartenführer der Reserve) Arved Theurmann. The Unit was still undergoing training on 8 May 1945, when it surrendered to British forces without having seen combat.

UNIFORMS & INSIGNIA: OVERVIEW

Headgear

Eastern legionaries wore German Army uniform items, though sometimes with traditional Caucasian additions. Headgear included the M1916, M1935 and M1942 steel helmets, with all decals removed; M1938 officers' and M1934 and M1942 enlisted ranks' peakless field caps; M1940 tropical and M1943 field-grey peaked field caps; and Caucasian high (*papakha*) or low (*kubanka*) fleece or fur caps. German enlisted ranks' M1934 and officers' M1935 peaked service caps were usually worn only after the adoption of full German uniform from 18 March 1944.

Uniforms & personal equipment

Officers wore the M1925 or narrower M1938 and M1943 brown leather belts with a pistol reversed on the left hip in a brown leather 'hardshell' or 'softshell' holster; 6 x 30 short binoculars for subaltern officers; and an M1924 brown leather or M1935 black map/dispatch case. Senior NCOs wore the black leather enlisted ranks' belt with a pistol in a blackened holster. From 1941, officers and senior NCOs were issued an MP40 sub-machine gun with two sets of triple magazine pouches. Junior NCOs and men wore black leather M1939 infantry support Y-straps; two sets of M1933 triple rifle ammunition pouches; an M1931 breadbag, mess tin and water-bottle; M1934 entrenching tool, and scabbarded M1934 bayonet in an M1939 brown leather frog; an M1930 gasmask in an M1930 or M1936 fluted metal cylindrical container, and an M1932 camouflaged shelter-quarter.

Eastern Legion personnel had low priority for uniform and equipment issue and had to be content with worn-out or even damaged items. They also received captured enemy clothing, such as French and Czechoslovak Army khaki uniforms dyed field-grey, Royal Netherlands Army greenish-grey tunics, Red Army *pilotka* side-caps, Polish Army black berets, and British Army P37 webbing belts.

Oct 1943: *Poruchik* Abdurahman Fätälibeyli Düdeginsky, an officer in the Azerbaijan Legion. He wears an M1943 field cap with silver crown piping and embroidered eagle badge, with an enlisted ranks' M1940 tunic. The breast eagle is again embroidered in silver on dark bluish-green, and his Oberleutnant-equivalent rank insignia (see Chart 3) are the M1942 (type 2) introduced the previous month. He displays the button-hole ribbon of the Iron Cross 2nd Class. (Author's collection)

German cadre officers and NCOs wore their standard German uniforms and insignia plus the relevant legion arm shield. During wartime, officers were supposed to wear enlisted ranks' coarse-quality uniform items, but many, particularly Germans, ignored this order. The Turkestan and Caucasian Waffen-SS units wore a mixture of Army and Waffen-SS uniform items.

Rank insignia

During the 37 months of their existence, 24 Apr 1942–8 May 1945, the Eastern Legions wore three different sets of rank insignia, with two further sets proposed but not adopted.

(**1a**) M1942 (type 1) rank insignia, OKH Order 6953/42, 24 Apr 1942 (see Chart 2). Security Unit red collar patches with German silver NCO braid edging and bars; officers' narrow silver wire shoulder straps with gold wire knots; enlisted ranks' dark bluish-green straps piped red 'with silver NCOs' braid bars. German was the language of command.

(**1b**) OKH Order 2390/42, 1 June 1942, added the rank of *Stellvertretender Kompanieführer*, and first-pattern legion colour piping.

(**1c**) OKH Order 8000/42, Aug 1942, confirmed the M1942 (type 1) rank insignia.

(**2a**) M1942 (type 2) rank insignia, 17 Nov 1942 (see Chart 3). Dark bluish-green collar patches with second-pattern legion colour piping and silver officers' stars, silver NCO braid edging and bars; officers' narrow silver wire shoulder straps with gold wire knots; enlisted ranks' field-grey straps piped in second-pattern legion colours, with silver NCOs' braid bars. From 15 Sept 1943, all subaltern officers had narrow silver wire shoulder straps without gold wire knots. From 29 May 1943, Russian and German positional titles were replaced with military ranks, and Russian became the language of command.

(**2b**) M1942 (type 2) rank insignia, 1 Jan 1944. The ranks of *Obergefreiter* and *Oberlegionär* were introduced, each rank wearing a German silver star on the shoulder straps.

C AZERBAIJAN LEGION

(1) *Gruppenführer*, 804th 'Aslan' Inf Bn; Bugursh, Caucasus, September 1942

This section commander in the 'Lion' Bn wears the M1934 field cap and M1940 uniform with mouse-grey cap and breast eagles, and the Legion's painted metal oval cap cockade. The M1942 (type 1) red Security Unit collar patches, and red-piped dark bluish-green shoulder straps, bear silver NCO braid and rank bars respectively, and he displays the M1942 right arm shield. His visible infantry equipment includes the Karabiner 98k rifle, M1933 ammunition pouches, M1939 supporting Y-straps, and behind his left hip the M1934 entrenching-tool and M1937 bayonet.

(2) *Poruchik*, Azerbaijan 807th Inf Bn; Toulon, southern France, December 1943

This lieutenant wears an M1940 tropical uniform (apparently either bleached out, or perhaps made from Luftwaffe tropical fabric), with mouse-grey cap and breast eagles on light-brown backing. His field cap has both officers' silver piping at the crown and the front of the flap, and the Legion's M1942 officers' cockade. The collar bears M1942 (type 2) rank insignia, comprising dark bluish-green patches piped light-green for Azerbaijan, with silver NCO braid edging and rank bar; the second-pattern narrow shoulder straps lack the gold rank knot. He displays the M1943 arm shield, and the pin-back Eastern People's Silver Gallantry Medal 1st Class with Swords.

(3) *Waffen-Rottenführer*, Waffen-SS East Turkic Armed Group; Slovakia, autumn 1944

This 'number 1' gunner of MG42 fire team wears complete Waffen-SS field-grey uniform and insignia for this rank and period, differentiated only by the Legion's M1943 arm shield. His belt kit includes the MG spares pouch at front right, with a pad to protect his hand when changing hot barrels, and on his left hip a holstered P08 for self-defence.

2
1
3

Thionville, northern France, Nov 1943: members of 782nd Inf Bn of the Turkestan Legion learn how to play cards. Two wear the M1942 field cap, and the tunics are a mixture of 5-button German M1940 and 7-button ex-Royal Netherlands Army, with the M1942 'mosque' arm patch and most with silver-grey breast eagles. The rank insignia are M1942 (type 2); the light-blue collar-patch piping of this legion does not show up here, though it does on the shoulder straps. Note the non-standard collar patches at centre and right foreground – without silver NCO edging, but still bearing a single silver bar. This may denote a probationary *Stellvetretender Gruppenfuhrer*. (Bundesarchiv_Bild_1011-295-1561-06A/Müller, Karl/ CC-BY-SA 3.0)

(**3**) *Proposed M1943 (type I)* rank insignia, OKH Order I/14124/43, 29 May 1943. A new arrangement of German silver NCO braid and silver stars on dark bluish-green collar patches with first-pattern legion colour piping, worn with dark bluish-green Russian officers' shoulder straps. The highest rank (colonel) had stars and red cloth piping and centre stripes, and enlisted ranks' pointed straps had red piping and German silver NCO braid bars. Positional titles were replaced with Russian and German rank titles. These insignia were not adopted, but the rank titles were.

(**4**) *Proposed M1943 (type 2)* rank insignia, published exclusively in the 'Special Eastern Number' of the German propaganda magazine *Signal*, Dec 1943 (see photo page 63). New-pattern shoulder straps were closely

modelled on the M1942 (2) patches, with field-grey Russian officers' shoulder straps with ornamental gold or silver rank-group chevrons and gold rank stars, and second-pattern legion colour inner piping; enlisted ranks wore M1942 (2) rank insignia. Presumably Russian and German rank titles. Three general-officer ranks were planned. These insignia were never manufactured.

(**5a**) M1944 rank insignia, OKH Order 32003/44, 18 Mar 1944 (see Chart 4). All Eastern legionaries, ROA and *Hilfswillige* who were 'deserving' (the exact proportion is unknown) could immediately adopt German uniforms, rank insignia and collar patches (although this made it difficult to distinguish Eastern legionaries from German cadre personnel). Russian was the language of command, but German was still used.

The rank title of a Caucasian officer should now be prefixed by the Legion title, e.g. *Georgischer Oberleutnant* (Georgian Lieutenant). Medical and veterinary officers used German rank titles, e.g. *Armenischer Oberarzt* (Armenian Medical Lt), *Wolgatatarische Militärarzt* (Volga-Tatar Medical 2nd Lt), *Turkestanischer Oberveterinär* (Turkestan Veterinary Lt) and *Azerbajdschanischer Militärveterinär* (Azerbaijan Veterinary 2nd Lieutenant).

(**5b**) M1944 rank insignia, OKH Order, 15 June 1944. The rank of *Ober-Fel'dfebel'* was introduced, and *Oberlegionär* and *Legionär* were redesignated *Ober-Strelok* and *Dobrovolets* ('Volunteer') respectively. While Russian was the official language of command, legionaries unofficially used Azerbaijan etc rank titles.

A *Gruppenführer* of the Azerbaijan Legion in France, 1943, displaying the silver M1939 Infantry Assault Badge for participation in attacks on at least three separate days. In this legion his M1942 (type 2) rank insignia would have light-green piping to the collar patches and field-grey shoulder straps; the two rank bars across the latter seem to be mouse-grey rather than silver. The long buttonhole-ribbon is green with red inset sidestripes, denoting one of the Gold 2nd Class awards. (Tchakov Collection)

Three Volga-Tatar legionaries on parade, 1942, carrying captured Soviet Mosin-Nagant M1891/30 rifles; the need to supply large quantities of 7.62mm ammunition would have complicated the logistics of their parent formation. The M1942 helmets have no decals, and the M1940 field-grey greatcoats lack shoulder straps. (Tchakov Collection)

National emblem

From the outset in Apr 1942, as an indication of Wehrmacht membership, Eastern legionaries were entitled to wear the German 'Army eagle', with outstretched wings and clutching a wreathed swastika, as an upper cap badge and above the right breast pocket. Officers wore them embroidered in silver (aluminium) wire on a dark bluish-green background, and enlisted ranks machine-woven in mouse-grey or silver-grey on a field-grey background. Initially the German circular national cockade in black (outer), white (intermediate) and red (centre) was worn below the cap eagle, for officers incorporating silver wire, and for enlisted ranks machine-woven on a field-grey diamond. The M1943 field cap was manufactured with the eagle and cockade together on a T-shaped field-grey backing.

Legion cockades

On 11 Nov 1942, the German circular cockade was replaced by Tsarist Russian-style M1942 painted metal oval cockades (see specifics below, under 'The Eastern Legions: Profiles: Distinctive insignia'). These had two or three concentric ovals, and officers' badges had an additional dagged 'sunburst' outer edge. The 'Special Eastern Number' chart of Dec 1943 portrays the cockades as circular, but this is unconfirmed. After the adoption of all-German insignia from 18 Mar 1944, some troops chose to retain their legion oval cockades.

Legion identifying colours

All Eastern Legion bns were organized as infantry, so colours were used to distinguish the legions, not branches of service. Order 2390/42, 1 June 1942, prescribed first-pattern colours for five Legions (omitting Volga-Tatars, not yet formed) for wear as 'underlays', but did not specify if the underlays were to the collar patches, the shoulder straps, or both, and there is no evidence of them actually being worn. The second-pattern legion colours introduced on 17 Nov 1942 were displayed as piping, both around the dark bluish-green collar patches and on enlisted ranks' field-grey shoulder straps. (See specifics below, under 'The Eastern Legions: Profiles: Distinctive insignia'.)

The specialist sub-units attached to German bns probably wore legion arm shields and German branch-colour (*Waffenfarbe*) piping and underlays: white for Guard and Field sub-units; orange for Ordnance; light brown for Labour, Construction and Road Construction; black for Construction Engineers, Railway Construction Engineers and Railway Bridge Construction Engineers; light blue for Supply and Pack Supply.

Legion bns permitted to wear German uniforms and insignia from 18 Mar 1944 wore German branch-colour cap piping, officers' collar-patch stripes and shoulder-strap underlay, while enlisted ranks wore branch-colour shoulder-strap piping: white for infantry, otherwise as for specialist sub-units.

Arm shields

From 1942 to 8 May 1945, personnel of the Eastern Legions wore coloured patches on their right upper sleeves, the position worn by other non-German

Since no arm shields are visible in this 1944 photo of Azerbaijan legionaries, there is nothing to distinguish them from German soldiers except the customized dark bluish-green shoulder straps piped light-green. The use of standard German Army insignia was extended to the Eastern Legions on 18 March 1944. (Tchakov Collection)

units in the Wehrmacht. The patches were of either oval or 'Polish-shield' shapes, contrasting with Waffen-SS foreign legions, which wore more squared 'French shields' on the lower left sleeve. Armenia and Georgia used only one pattern of arm shield each, while Azerbaijan and North Caucasus had two variations, and Turkestan and Volga-Tatars three (see Chart 1).

A German field officer pins an Eastern People's medal to the tunic of a Volga-Tatar legionary. The soldiers are wearing M1942 helmets and 5-button M1940 tunics with dark bluish-green collars. Interestingly, in this 1942 photo they display German M1940 collar braids, but combined with the piped shoulder straps of the Eastern Legions' M1942 (type 2) regulations. In the Volga-Tatar Legion the piping was green-and-blue twist cord. (Tchakov Collection)

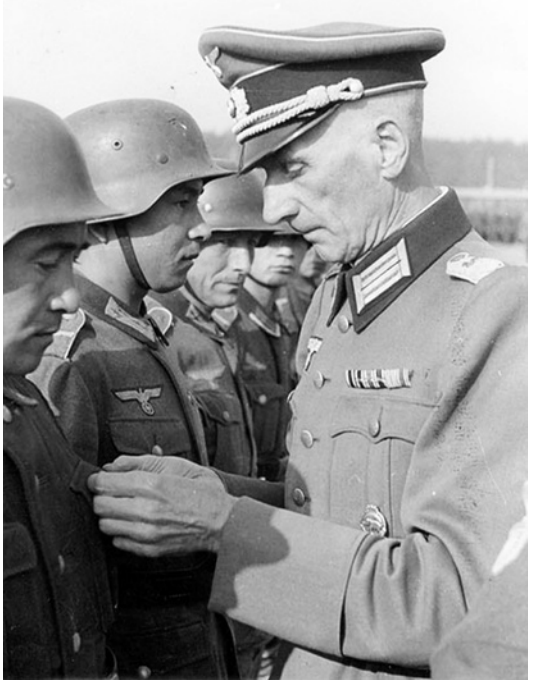
Unit insignia

No unit badges were officially authorized, but some Eastern Legions followed German Army unofficial practice by wearing coloured wool loops at the base of their shoulder straps to distinguish bns of a regt or cos of a battalion. Legion bns attached to German Mtn Regts may have worn the prestigious M1939 oval Eidelweiß badge on the right upper sleeve.

Medals

On 14 July 1942, the Eastern People's Gallantry and Service Decoration (*Tapferkeits- und Verdienstauszeichnung für Angehörige der Ostvölker*) was introduced for Eastern Legions, Eastern Troops and *Hilfswillige* (including cadre personnel), in 10 classes. The decoration comprised a gold, silver or bronze 8-rayed star, with 3 shorter rays between each long point, and a superimposed boss with a bordered floral central motif; combat (gallantry) awards incorporated crossed swords to differentiate them from non-combat (meritorious service) awards. The 1st Class decorations were pinback stars worn on the left breast pocket. The suspension, breast and buttonhole ribbons of other classes were green, with inset side stripes in red (for gold classes) or white (for silver). Depending on the class, breast ribbons might bear miniature gold, silver or bronze stars or crossed swords. The classes were:

(1) Gold Gallantry Medal 1st Class with Swords – gold pinback medal with swords



(2) Gold Service Medal 1st Class – gold pinback medal
(3) Silver Gallantry Medal 1st Class with Swords – silver pinback medal with swords
(4) Silver Service Medal 1st Class – silver pinback medal
(5) Gold Gallantry Medal 2nd Class with Swords – gold medal with swords, and green & red ribbon
(6) Gold Service Medal 2nd Class – gold medal with green & red ribbon
(7) Silver Gallantry Medal 2nd Class with Swords – silver medal with swords, and green & white ribbon
(8) Silver Service Medal 2nd Class – silver medal with green & white ribbon
(9) Bronze Gallantry Medal 2nd Class with Swords – bronze medal with swords, and green ribbon
(10) Bronze Service Medal 2nd Class – bronze medal with green ribbon.

From 27 Sept 1943 all Eastern forces were also entitled to any appropriate German gallantry, campaign or service award.

Waffen-SS units

The East Turkestan and Caucasian Armed Units wore standard Waffen-SS or Army field-grey M1940 (and later) uniform items, with the silver-grey SS eagle and skull badges on the field cap, but apparently no legion cockades. Rank insignia was standard Waffen-SS, rank titles for non-Aryan personnel being prefixed *Waffen-* rather than *SS-* (e.g. *Waffen-Unterscharführer*).

The East Turkestan Unit Armed Groups probably wore their Turkestan, Idel-Ural (Volga-Tatar), Crimea and Azerbaijan Legion arm shields on the right upper sleeve. The Unit was authorized a silver wolf's-head right collar patch (the grey wolf being an ancient Turkic symbol), and a green (for Islam) left cuff band with silver-woven inner edging and the title '*Osttürkischer Waffen-Verband der SS*'. However, although manufactured, these insignia were never issued.

The Caucasian Unit probably wore their Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and North Caucasus Legion arm shields on the right upper sleeve. A sword-and-buckler badge was manufactured for the right collar patch, but never issued; personnel of both units wore SS runes or blank right collar patches.

D

GEORGIAN LEGION

(1) *Hauptmann*, 795th 'Shalva Maglakelidze' Inf Bn; Kuban, southern Russia, April 1943

This German cadre battalion commander wears an officer's field-grey M1935 service cap with mountain infantry light-green piping, and M1939 Edelweiß badge between the eagle and cockade. His M1943 officers' tunic has no turnback cuffs, and infantry-white shoulder-strap underlay and collar-patch 'lights', suggesting recent transfer from the mountain infantry. On his right sleeve he wears an M1939 Edelweiß mountain troops' badge above an M1942 Georgian Legion arm shield, and on his left the M1942 Crimea Shield for service on that front between 21 Sept 1941 and 4 July 1942. He displays both classes of the Iron Cross, a black M1939 Wound Badge and M1939 Infantry Assault Badge.

(2) *Legioner*, 823rd 'Shota Rustaveli' Inf Bn; Guernsey, October 1943

In shabby contrast to the smartness of the previous figure, this rifleman in the occupied Channel Islands wears the enlisted ranks' M1942 field cap and M1940 greatcoat. Details to note are the Legion's M1942 cap cockade and arm shield; its dark-red piping on his field-grey shoulder straps; and the fact that his German ammunition pouches are attached to a captured British P37 webbing belt, just visible here at the buckle.

(3) *Poruchik*, 822nd 'Queen Tamara' Inf Bn; Texel, Netherlands, April 1945

This Georgian officer, depicted during his unit's mutiny, has replaced his Legion uniform and insignia with traditional Caucasian military dress. He wears a black lambswool *papakha* hat, and a white close-fitting shirt with black hooks replacing buttons. The black calf-length coat has two sets of 10 ceremonial cartridge-tubes, and unofficial rank insignia comprising M1942 (type 2) narrow legion silver-wire shoulder straps with a German gilt star to indicate rank. He wears highly polished riding boots, and carries an ornate *kindzhal* dagger.

GEORGIEN
1
2
3

THE EASTERN LEGIONS: PROFILES

TURKESTAN LEGION

Background

Turkestan is a vast region stretching 2,000 miles eastwards from the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea to the Outer Mongolian border, and 1,300 miles from the southern border of Russia to the northern border of Iran. Never a unified political entity, its various states were conquered by Tsarist Russia between 1839 and 1895. After a failed revolt against Russian conscription in July–Aug 1916, Turkestan's political leaders declared independence in 1918. During the post-revolutionary chaos there was a White Russian Turkestan Army (22 Jan 1919–6 Jan 1920) and a Turkestan Red Army (5 Mar–15 June 1919). The Russian Red Army conquered the region, establishing the Turkestan Soviet Federative Republic (30 Apr 1918), renamed on 24 Sept 1920 the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Turkestan ASSR).

Ukraine, 1943: a Turkestan Legion *Gruppenführer* (left) instructs his senior section personnel with a notably well-detailed 'sand-table'. The M1934 field caps bear German Army insignia, and the M1940 5-button tunics mouse-grey breast eagles. The rank insignia on collar and shoulder straps are M1942 (type 2), with light-blue piping and silver NCO *Tresse* braid. (Tchakov Collection)

On 27 Oct 1924, the Turkestan ASSR was dissolved by the Soviet government and divided into five Soviet Socialist Republics: the Uzbek SSR (27 Oct 1924), now Uzbekistan; Turkmen SSR (13 May 1925), now Turkmenistan; Tajik SSR (5 Dec 1929), now Tajikistan; Kazakh SSR (5 Dec 1936), now Kazakhstan; and Kirghiz SSR (5 Dec 1936), now Kyrgystan. The Germans allowed a Turkestan National Committee to govern a projected Turkestan Autonomous Province (*Reichskommissariat*).

Legioner Sigerbal Kusyerbay, Turkestan Legion, 1943. Instead of the dark-green collar patches of M1942 (type 2) regulations, his are apparently in the same legion light blue as the piping on his shoulder straps. Given the rapid changes in regulations, inconsistency was inevitable. (Author's collection)

Population

Turkestan's population in 1942 comprised 13 main ethnic groups, all formerly nomadic. The largest contingents were Turkic-speaking Sunni Muslims with Shia Muslim minories: Karakalpaks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Uyghurs and Uzbeks, Shia Tajiks, and small groups of Eastern Tatars. There were also small numbers of Persian-speaking, mainly Sunni Muslims – Baluchs, Iranians, Kuraminian and Pamiris; and of Chinese-speaking, mainly Sunni Muslim Dungans.

Organization

The Eastern Legions Formation HQ supervised the training of 22 Turkestan Inf Bns (listed in order of completion). Of these, 14 bns – 450, 452, 781–791, 811 Turkestan Legion – were completed, and 6 bns – 792-794 & 839–841 – were awaiting completion. On 18 May 1942, 162nd Inf Div Command began forming 17 Turkestan Legion Field Bns, of which 13 bns – Legion, 2 Legion, I/370, I/295, I/29, I/44, I/100 (Lt), I/371, I/297, I/384 (Lt), I/94, I/II/76 & I/305 – were completed, and 4 bns – I/71, I/79, I/113 & I/376 – were awaiting completion. These 27 completed and 10 incomplete bns made the Turkestan Legion the largest contingent. It also shared with the Azerbaijan Legion the German High Command's greatest confidence in its combat value.

Group of junior officers and NCOs of 781st Inf Bn, Turkestan Legion, on the French Channel coast, mid-1943; note the mixture of old and new field caps, and of tunics. The *Poruchik* (fourth from left) has an officers' M1938 field cap with silver piping at crown and flap-front, and an enlisted ranks' M1940 field-grey tunic with officer-quality silver breast eagle, M1942 (type 2) insignia, and the 'mosque' arm patch. The taller *Zugführer* to the right of him has an enlisted ranks' M1942 field cap with 2-button flap, and an officer's M1937 white summer tunic. Both wear officers' breeches and boots. (Tchakov Collection)

Table 2: Turkestan Legion, 24 March 1942–8 May1945

- **450 Reinforced Turkestan Inf Bn** (Poland, 24.3.1942); with 16 Mot Div -Yashkul, Kalmykia (12.1942); Taman, Kuban (2.1943); Donetsk, Ukraine (4.1943) > **450 Turkestan Gren Bn** (S.Russia, autumn 1943); > **1 East Muslim SS-Regt** (Poniatowa, SE Poland 18.12.1943).
- **452 Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 10.5.1942); Jedlnia, Poland (15.5.1942); with 97 Lt Div, Neftyanaya, S. Russia (23.9.1942); Tuapse, Caucasus, 17 Army (10.1942); Gunaika (11.1942); Kuban (2.1943); Ukraine (11.1943–6.1944); disbanded (Ukraine, 13.6.1944); > **4/246 Construction Eng Co.**
- **781 Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 1.6.1942); Radom, Poland (17.6.1942); with 101 Lt Div (Caucasus, 9.1942); Kabardinka (28.9.1942); with 101 Lt Div (Tuapse, Caucasus, 12.1942); with 4 Mtn Div (Caucasus,1.1943); Kherson, Ukraine (4.1943); Legionowo, Poland (24.4.1943); with 15th Army, NW France, (10.1943); > **I/731 Gren Regt**, 711 Inf Div, Channel coast (19.4.1944); > **781 Turkestan Inf Bn** (7.7.1944); disbanded, Belgium (9.1944).
- **1 Turkestan Legion**, under 162 Inf Div (r. Legionowo, Poland, 4.7.1942); disbanded (Poland, 2.6.1943), joined **HQ/246 Arty Regt.**
- **2 Turkestan Legion**, under 162 Inf Div (r. Legionowo, Poland, 4.7.1942); > **303 Inf Regt** (Poland, 4.6.1943).
- **782 Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 11.7.1942); Radom, Poland (14.7.1942); Zimovniki, S Russia (10.10.1942); with 16 Mot Div (Yashkul, Kalmykia,10.1942); Legionowo, Poland (4.1943); N France (7.1943); Aachen (1945).
- **783 Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 9.1942); Don, S. Russia (1943); Odessa, Ukraine (1943); disbanded (12.1944), personnel to **1 Vol Depot Regt.**
- **784 Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, 9.1942); S. Russia (1943); disbanded Ukraine (11.1943).
- **785 Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 1.11.1942); Central Russia (1943); disbanded (12.1943).
- **444 Turkestan Cav Sqn** (r. S. Russia, 1942) with 444 Security Div; > **811 Turkestan Inf Bn**, 16 Mot Div (Yashkul, Kalmykia, 10–12.1942); disbanded (Ukraine (4.1944).
- **786 Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 5.12.1942); Central Russia (1943); Belgrade (10.1944); disbanded (Silesia, Germany, 24.11.1944).
- **787 Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 21.12.1942); Netherlands (15.3.1943); > **IV/461 Fort Gren Regt**, 347 Inf Div (Netherlands, 14.1.1944); > **787 Turkestan Inf Bn** (Katwijk, Netherlands, 8.1944); Ijmuiden, Netherlands (3.1945); surrendered (4.1945).
- **788 Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 1.1943); disbanded (12.1943).
- **789 Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 25.2.1943); Greece (1943–44); disbanded (1.1945).
- **790 'Timur' Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 1.6.1943); with 9 Army (Oder, 2.1945).
- **791 Turkestan Inf Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 1.9.1943); with 9th Army (Oder, 2.1945).
- **796 Turkestan Supply Bn** (12.1942); disbanded (12.4.1943).
- **792–4, 839–41 Turkestan Inf Bns** (formation not completed, 12.1943).

- **I/370 Turkestan Field Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, summer 1942) for 370 Inf Div; Kalmykia (1942); Crimea with 335 Inf Div (8.1943); Ukraine (1943–44); to **1 Vol Depot Regt** (France, 4.1944); disbanded (12.1944).
- **I/295 Turkestan Field Bn** (r. Romny, Ukraine, 13.8.1942) in 1 Turkestan Legion for 295 Inf Div; destroyed, Stalingrad (1.1943); possibly re-formed (2–11. 1943 and 5–11.1944).
- **I/29 Turkestan Field Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 18.8.1942) in 1 Turkestan Legion for 76 Inf Div; disbanded (16.6.1943) after Div's destruction at Stalingrad (1.1943).
- **I/44 Turkestan Field Bn** (r. Legionowo, Poland, 21.8.1942) in Azerbaijan Legion for 44 Inf Div; joined 1 Turkestan Legion (9.2.1943) after Div's destruction at Stalingrad (1.1943); > **I/303 Inf Regt**, 162 Turkestan Inf Div.; surrendered (Austria, 8.5.1945).
- **I/839 Turkestan Field Bn** (r., Legionowo, Poland, autumn 1942) for 389 Inf Div, diverted to Army Group Centre; disbanded (12.1943).

- **I/100 (Lt) Turkestan Field Bn**, (r. Legionowo, Poland, 12.10.1942) for 100 Lt Div; disbanded (2.1943) after Div's destruction at Stalingrad; > **IV/236 Arty Regt**, 162 Turkestan Inf Div (Legionowo, Poland, 1.6.1943); surrendered (Austria, 8.5.1945).
- **I/371 Turkestan Field Bn**, (r. Legionowo, Poland, 12.10.1942) for 371 Inf Div, lost at Stalingrad (2.1943); transferred to 162 Inf Div (1943); disbanded (6.1944).
- **I/297 Turkestan Field Bn**, (r. Legionowo, Poland, 14.10.1942) from 6 (Turkestan) Training Bn of the Armenian Legion (r. 4.7.1942) for 297 Inf Div; disbanded (2.1943) after Div's destruction at Stalingrad; > **II/303 Gren Regt**, 162 Turkestan Inf Div (Legionowo, Poland, 1.6.1943); surrendered (Austria, 8.5.1945).
- **I/384 Turkestan Field Bn**, (r. Legionowo, Poland, 3.11.1942) for 384 Inf Div; disbanded (2.1943) after Div's destruction at Stalingrad; > **III/303 Gren Regt**, 162 Turkestan Inf Div (Legionowo, Poland, 1.6.1943); surrendered (Austria, 8.5.1945).
- **I/94 Turkestan Field Bn**, (r. Legionowo, Poland, 6.11.1942) with 162 Inf Div for 94 Inf Div; (disbanded 6.12.1943); > **1 East Muslim SS-Regt** (Poniatowa, SE Poland (18.12.1943).
- **II/76 Turkestan Field Bn**, (r. Legionowo, Poland, 2.4.1943) in Armenian Legion for 129 Inf Div; > I/76 Turkestan Field Bn (Legionowo, Poland, 19.9.1942); 2nd Army (Orel, C. Russia, 8.2.1943); XIII Corps (C. Russia, 11.4.1943); Turkestan Legion (Legionowo, Poland, 28.5.1943); > **III/359 Gren Regt** (Montenegro, 19.4.1944); Albania (1944); Croatia, (1.1945); Austria (5.1945).
- **I/305 Turkestan Field Bn**, (r. Legionowo, Poland, 6.11.1942) for 305 Inf Div; destroyed at Stalingrad (2.1943); transferred to 1 Turkestan Legion (9.2.1943); > **162 Div Bn**, 162 Turkestan Inf Div (Poland, 10.6.1943); disbanded 13.8.1944 to **329 Gren Regt**.
- **I/71, I/79, I/113 and I/376 Turkestan Field Bns**; planned but not formed (1942–43).

- 4x Turkestan Labour Bns: I–IV
- 1x Turkestan Construction Eng Bn: 1101
- 2x Turkestan Ordnance Bns: 8, 11
- 3x Turkestan Guard Cos: 5/507, 6 & 7/571.
- 55x Turkestan Construction Cos: 3/5, 4/8, 4/11, 2/12, 2/22, 2/23, 13/40, 4/44, 5/46, 4/52, 51, 54–6, 61, 4/57, 58–9, 4/79, 5/83, 4/87, 4/112, 4/120, 4/124, 4/128, 5/129, 4/132, 4/135, 1 & 4/136, 4/153, 4/154, 5/156, 2/137, 4/218, 5/245, 3/248, 4/320, 13/401, 5/414, 3/416, 4/504, 4/506, 4 &5/511, 5/515, 4/544, 4/549, 4/562, 4/591, 4/737, 1000–2, 1007–8, 2005, 2021.
- 1x Turkestan Railway Construction Eng Co: 5/2
- 1x Turkestan Supply Bn: 1
- 36x Turkestan Supply Cos: 5/27, 6/49, 5/99, 3, 5 & 6/102, 3/117, 5/349, 3/533, 5 & 6/50, 3 & 4/522, 5/543, 3/550, 4/561, 4/562, 4/563, 5/ & 7/571, 3/572, 4/573, 3 & 7/574, 4/575, 4/592, 5/600, 4 & 5/606, 3 & 6/608, 3/610, 5 & 6/619, 3/622, 4/697, 726
- 8x Turkestan Pack Supply Cols: 54 & 100/181, 104, 117, 724, 734, 738, 750

Distinctive insignia

The M1942 painted metal Turkestan Legion cockade was red (inner) and dark blue (outer); as in all the Legions, officers' cockades had a 'sunburst' outer edge. The first-pattern legion colour was light blue, the second red and blue worn as cord 'twist' piping.

There were three patterns of right-sleeve arm patches. The most commonly worn was the M1942: a green oval outlined black, portraying in white, yellow and black the Samarkand mosque, below the yellow motto BiZ ALLA Bilen ('God is with Us') and above a black TURKISTAN title. The M1943 badge – a 'Polish' shield halved red over blue, bearing a white vertical bow and horizontal arrow, all beneath a blue-on-black TURKISTAN title – had limited distribution. The M1944, a variation of the M1942 but with a different motto, was rarely encountered.

A *Legioner* of the Turkestan Legion wearing M1944 rank insignia on his M1940 tunic, so with only the 'mosque' arm patch to distinguish him at first glance from a German soldier. In what is obviously a civilian studio portrait, he carries NCOs' M1936 grey leather gloves for walking-out dress. (Tchakov Collection)

AZERBAIJAN LEGION

Background & population

Azerbaijan is situated in the south-eastern Caucasus on the west coast of the Caspian Sea. The Russian Empire annexed parts of the Iranian Qajar Empire in 1828. Azerbaijan formed part of the short-lived Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (22 Apr–28 May 1918), before declaring itself the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, and forming the Azerbaijan National Army on 1 Aug 1918. The Russian Red Army defeated Azerbaijan on 28 Apr 1920, reorganizing it as the Azerbaijan SSR.

Azerbaijanis are Turkic-speaking, mainly Shia Muslim former nomads with a small Sunni Muslim minority.

Organization

The Caucasian-Muslim Legion (*Kaukasisch-Mohammedanische Legion*) was formed on 24 Mar 1942 at Jedlnia, occupied Poland., but on 22 July the North Caucasians transferred to the newly formed North Caucasus Legion,

Table 3: Azerbaijan Legion, 22 July 1942–8 May 1945

- **III Turkestan-Caucasian-Muslim Legion** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, 13.1.1942); > **Caucasian-Muslim Legion** (Jedlnia, Poland, 24.3.1942); > **Azerbaijan Legion** (Poland, 22.7.1942).

- **804 Caucasian Muslim Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, 4.7.1942); > **804 'Aslan' Azerbaijan Inf Bn** (Jedlnia, Poland, 22.7.1942); Rostov, S Russia (8.9.1942); Armavir, Caucasus Mtns with 4 Mtn Div (10.1942); Kuban (early 1943); S Ukraine (1943); under 2 Vol Depot Regt (Mende, S France, 19.4.1944); >**I/329 Gren Regt**, 162 Turkestan Inf Div (Italy, 6.9.1944); surrendered (Austria, 8.5.1945).
- **805 Azerbaijan Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, 21.8.1942); with 111 Inf Div, 1st Pz Army (Maikop, S Russia, 10.1942); Nalchik, Caucasus (11.1942); Mount Tuchu, Caucasus (12.1942); Pyatigorsk, Caucasus (6.1.1943); Kuban (3.1943); Jedlnia, Poland (4.1943); disbanded (8.1944).
- **806 'Igit' Azerbaijan Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, 23.9.1942); with 50 Inf Div (Mozdok and Verchniy Kurp, Caucasus, 17.12.1942; Nizhniy Kurp, Caucasus, 19.12.1942; Chernoyarskaya, S Russia, 1.1.1943); Kuban bridgehead and Kerch, S Russia (2.1943); Crimea (13.4.1943); Ukraine (1943–44); under 2 Vol Depot Regt (Mende, S France, 19.4.1944); > **II/329 Gren Regt**, 162 Turkestan Inf Div (Italy, 6.9.1944); surrendered (Austria, 8.5.1945).
- **807 Azerbaijan Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, 7.12.1942); S France (11.1943); > **IV/765 Gren Regt**, 242 Inf Div (Toulon, S France, 19.4.1944); disbanded (7.10.1944).
- **817 Azerbaijan Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, 15.1.1943); Warsaw Uprising, Poland (8–10.1944); under 4th Pz Army (Radom, Poland, 1.1945); Liberec, Sudetenland (5.1945).
- **818 Azerbaijan Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, summer 1943); under 4th Pz Army (Krakow, Poland, 1944); under 4th Pz Army (Vistula, Poland, 1.1945); Silesia, SE Germany (5.1945).
- **819 Azerbaijan Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, 24.8.1943); Army Group 'A' (1.1945); with 602 Div (Upper Silesia, SE Germany. 5.1945).
- **820 Azerbaijan Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, summer 1943); formation doubtful.
- **821 Azerbaijan Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, summer 1943); formation doubtful.
- **I/4 (Mtn) Azerbaijan Field Bn** (r. Poland, 9.1942); for 4 Mtn Div (Caucasus) but did not serve; > **I/314 Gren Regt**, 162 Turkestan Inf Div (Poland, 7.6.1943); surrendered (Austria, 8.5.1945).
- **I/73 Azerbaijan Field Bn** (r. Poland, 9.1942); for 73 Inf Div; Dzhiginshoe, Caucasus (16.1.1943); Novorossiysk, S Russia (1.1943); Taman Peninsula (21.1.1943); Crimea (16.3.1943); disbanded (17.2.1944).
- **II/73 Azerbaijan Field Bn** (r. Poland, 9.1942); > **I/73 Azerbaijan Field Bn** (summer 1943); Crimea (4.1944); >**2 Vol Depot Regt** (Mende, S France, 19. 4.1944); disbanded (10.1944).
- **I/97 (Lt) Azerbaijan Field Bn** (r. Poland, 17.1.1943), intended for 97 Lt Div, Caucasus, but formation doubtful; > **II/314 Gren Regt**, 162 Turkestan Inf Div (Poland, 1.6.1943); surrendered (Austria, 8.5.1945).
- **I/101 (Lt) Azerbaijan Field Bn** (r. Poland, winter 1942), intended for 101 Lt Div, Caucasus, but formation doubtful; > **III/314 Gren Regt**, 162 Turkestan Inf Div (Poland, 1.6.1943); surrendered (Austria, 8.5.1945).
- **IV/101 (Lt) Azerbaijan Field Bn** (r. Poland, winter 1942), intended for 101 Lt Div, Caucasus, but formation doubtful.
- **I/111 'Dönmec' Azerbaijan Field Bn** (r. Mozdok, Caucasus, 22.12.1942), under 111 Inf Div; Kherson, S Ukraine (28.2.1943); Lozovaya, S Ukraine (20.4.1943); Ukraine (1944); Warsaw Uprising (8.1944); West Prussia & Poland (1945); > **III/1607 Gren Regt**, 599 Russian Gren Bde (Aalborg, Denmark, 4.1945).
- **I/50 Azerbaijan Field Bn**; planned but not formed (1942–43).

- 1x Azerbaijan Guard Co: 4/144
- 8x Azerbaijan Construction Cos: 4/25, 87, 4/107, 4/137, 4/146, 7/553, 4/563
- 5x Azerbaijan Construction Eng Cos: 4/8, 8/8, 9/25, 5/63, 4/597
- 4x Azerbaijan Railway Construction Cos: 1/87, 5/106, 12/107, 5/111
- 3x Azerbaijan Road Construction Cos: 5/551, 5/559, 5/563
- 6x Azerbaijan Supply Cos:, 5/118, 2/543, 4/548, 593, 4/572, 4/584

RIGHT
A *Zugführer* of the Azerbaijan Legion in France, 1943. From Nov 1942 this formerly NCO positional title now identified a second-lieutenant; note his M1940 tunic with customized dark bluish-green collar and silver-embroidered breast eagle, and the M1938 officers' brown belt with holstered P08 pistol. See Chart 3 for his rank insignia, which would be piped in light green for this Legion. (Tchakov Collection)

FAR RIGHT
Excellent portrait of an Azerbaijan Legion *Gruppenführer*, France, 1943; again, this reminds us of the range of ethnic features and complexions to be found in the Eastern Legions. His M1940 5-button tunic bears the M1942 arm shield, and clearly visible M1942 (type 2) insignia at collar and shoulder. His Infantry Assault Badge and black Wound Badge identify him as a combat veteran, and although only a corporal-equivalent, he sports a silver breast eagle and wears an M1938 officers' belt. He seems to have a holstered pistol on his left hip, with some type of fighting knife thrust under his belt behind it. (Tchakov Collection)

and the Caucasian-Muslim Legion was redesignated the Azerbaijan Legion (*Aserbaidschanische Legion*).

The Eastern Legions Formation HQ trained 9 Azerbaijan Inf Bns; of these, 7 bns – 804–807 & 817–819 – completed their organization, and 2 bns – 820 & 821 – were planned but not formed. The 162nd Inf Div Command formed 8 Azerbaijan Field Bns; 7 bns were completed – I/4 (Mtn), I/73, II/73, I/97 (Lt), I/101 (Lt), IV/101 (Lt) & I/111; and 1 – I/50 – was awaiting completion. Azerbaijan therefore had 14 completed bns and 3 planned but incomplete.

Although they lack arm shields, this group photo shows a platoon of Azerbaijan legionaries in 1944, posing with a pair of Soviet M1910 Maxim machine guns. The (German cadre?) *Feldwebel* in the centre wears an M1934 *Schirmmütze* service cap to distinguish his senior NCO status. The others still have peakless prewar field caps, and display post-18 Mar 1944 insignia on a variety of tunics. The significance of the two white bars worn on his left sleeve by the soldier in the left foreground is unknown. (Tchakov Collection)

Privates of the Georgian Legion on the Channel coast of France, 1943, wearing M1942 helmets and 6-button M1942 tunics with the Legion's M1942 arm shield. Under magnification, they can be seen to still wear M1942 (type 1) rank insignia, with red Security Unit collar patches and dark-green shoulder straps piped red (see Chart 2). Their equipment is also motley: British P37 web belts, and Russian Mosin-Nagant rifles with fixed socket-bayonets. The left-hand man has a Degtyarev DP light machine gun, identifiable by the two metal cases, each of which holds three of the DP's 47-rd pan magazines. (Tchakov Collection)

One of relatively few photos clearly showing the use of the Eastern Legions' oval metal cap cockades below the German eagle badge, here pinned slightly off-centre on an M1942 field cap. While reflection hides its details, it is that of the Armenian Legion, painted concentric red (outer), dark blue (intermediate) and orange (centre). Although photographed in 1943, this Armenian *Gruppenführer*, Hasmik Nasarian, still wears the M1942 (type 1) rank insignia – yet another reminder that at any given date regulations were far from universally observed. (Author's collection)

Distinctive insignia

The M1942 Azerbaijan Legion cockade was green (centre), red (intermediate), and dark blue (outer). The first- and second-pattern Legion colour was light green.

There were two patterns of arm shield. The M1942 had dark blue, over red, over green horizontal stripes, all beneath a red-on-black ASERBAIDSCHAN title. The M1943 pattern was essentially the flag of the 1918–20 Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, adding on the central red stripe (or overlapping its edges) a white Muslim crescent and star – the *Dönmez*.

GEORGIAN LEGION

Background

Georgia, situated in the south-western Caucasus on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, was peacefully annexed by the Russian Empire during the 19th century. On 22 Apr 1918, Georgia joined Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Democratic Federative Republic of Transcaucasia, before declaring its independence as the Georgian Democratic Republic on 26 May 1918. The weak Georgian Army was unable to prevent the Russian Red Army occupying Georgia on 25 Feb 1921. There was also a pro-Bolshevik People's Guard (5 Sept 1917–Feb 1921). Georgia was redesignated the Georgian SSR on 5 Dec 1936.

Population

Of nine ethnic groups, the largest was Georgian Orthodox Christians speaking Georgian, a Kartvelian language, as did the Laz people, the Mingrelians and the Svans. The Adjarians of the Adjara ASSR differed in being Sunni or Shia Muslims.

Table 4: Georgian Legion, 24 February 1942–20 May 1945

- **795 'Shalva Maglakelidze' Georgian Inf Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 8.7.1942); Rifle & MG Cos with 1st Army (France, 1942); with 23 Pz Div (Pyatigorsk, Caucasus, 9–12.1942); re-formed as Inf Bn (Radom. Poland, 1.5.1943); with 709 Inf Div (Normandy, NW France, 13.10.1943); > **IV (Georgian)/739 Fort Regt** (4.5.1944); surrendered (Cherbourg, NW France, 30.6.1944).
- **796 Georgian Inf Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 12.9.1942); with 1 Mtn Div (Caucasus, 8–12.1942); > **796 Turkestan Supply Bn** (12.1942).
- **III Georgian Field Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 21.11.1942); > **797 'Giorgi Saakadze' Georgian Inf Bn** with 7 Army (Channel Coast, N France, 2.1943); > **I/739 Gren Regt**, 709 Inf Div (NW France, 9.4.1944); surrendered (Cotentin, NW France, 30.6.1944).
- **798 'King Erekle II Bagrationi' Georgian Inf Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 10.12.1942); with 7th Army (Channel Coast, NW France, 2.1943); with 19th Army (Upper Rhine, W Germany, 1.1944).
- **799 'King David Bagrationi-Maglakelidze' Georgian Inf Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 16.12.1942); with 7th Army (Channel Coast, NW France, 2.1943); with 19th Army (Upper Rhine, W Germany, 11.1944); Perigueux, SW France (11.1944); Sissonne, NE France (5.1944); heavy casualties (Normandy, 6.1944); Denmark ? (1945).
- **822 'Queen Tamara' Georgian Inf Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 6.1943); Zandvoort, (Netherlands, (7.21943); > **177 Gren Regt**, 219 Inf Div (camouflage designation), (Netherlands, 22.3.1945); mutinied (Texel, Netherlands, 5.4.–20.5.1945).
- **823 'Shota Rustaveli' Georgian Inf Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 26.6.1943); with 7th Army, (Guernsey, Channel Islands, 10.1943); under 583 Gren Regt (25.9.1943); > **IV/583 Gren Regt**, 319 Inf Div (Guernsey, 19.4.1944); surrendered (Guernsey, 8.5.1945).
- **824 'Ilia Chavchavadze' Georgian Inf Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 27.8.1943); disbanded (1.2.1944).
- **III Georgian Legion Training Bn**; > **I/1 Georgian Mtn Field Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 15.8.1942); intended for 1 Mtn Div (Caucasus), but transferred to 9th Army (Central Russia, 1.5.1943); disbanded (Central Russia, 6.11.1943).
- **I/298 Georgian Field Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 15.8.1942); intended for 298 Inf Div, 17th Army (Hadiach, Ukraine); > **II/4 Georgian Mtn Field Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 16.10.1942); departed for 4 Mtn Div (Caucasus, 6.1.1943); diverted to 335 Inf Div (Crimea, 6.1943); joined **1 Vol Depot Regt** (Castres, S France, 4.1944).
- **I/9 Georgian Field Bn** (r. Hadiach, Ukraine, 14.9.1942); departed for Caucasus, 10.11.1942; subordinated to 57 Gren Regt, 9 Inf Div (Caucasus, 12.12.1942); with 153 Field Training Div (Crimea, 1.3.1943); S Ukraine with 50 Inf Div; joined **1 Vol Depot Regt** (Castres, S France, 4.1944).
- **IV Georgian Legion Training Bn; > II/198 Georgian Field Bn** (r. Radom, Poland, 3.11.1942), intended for 198 Inf Div (Caucasus), but transferred to Southern Army Group (Ukraine, 2.5.1943); SE France (12.1943); Turin, N Italy (1944);Austria (4.1945).
- **III/9 & II/125 Georgian Field Bns**; planned but not formed (1942–43).

- 8x Georgian Construction Cos: 5/17, 5/24, 4/91, 4/105, 4/127, 4/415, 4/507, 4/680
- 2x Georgian Construction Eng Cos: 5/96, later 3/96, 4/121
- 1x Georgian Road Construction Eng Co: 407
- 1x Georgian Railway Bridge Construction Eng Co: 5/404
- 1x Georgian Field Co: 5/438
- 2x Georgian Guard Cos: 7/571, 4/591
- 15x Georgian Supply Cos: 4/147, 5/151, 6/151, 3/501, 5/548, 5/561, 3/571, 7/572, 4/592, 3/602, 6/602, 4/606, 3/607, 3/608, 4/612
- 4x Georgian Supply Transport Cos: 5 & 6/43, 5 & 6/151

Shalva Loladza was a Red Army Air Force squadron commander taken prisoner by the Germans, who joined the Georgian Legion. Serving with the 882nd Inf Bn on Texel Island in the Netherlands, on 9 Apr 1945 he led the Georgians in a mutiny against their German cadre personnel, but was killed in battle. On 25 Apr German naval and coastal artillery units retook the island, but fighting continued until as late as 20 May, when Canadian forces intervened to enforce the German surrender of 8 May. Here he wears an M1935 German officer's service cap and M1937 white summer tunic, with insignia following the Mar 1944 regulations. The photo shows clearly his choice of embroidered silver-wire on dark-green cap and breast eagles; infantry-white cap piping and 'lights' on the silver-wire collar braids; and, less clearly, the flat silver-grey wire shoulder straps of a *Podporuchik* on white underlay. He displays the button-hole ribbons of the Eastern People's Silver Service Medal 2nd Class and Bronze Service Medal 3rd Class. (Wikimedia Commons/ Shalva Loladza)

Other minorities included the Guriyer, Imeretines, and Kachetines. The South Ossetians were Orthodox Christians speaking an Iranian language. The Abkhazians of the Abkhazian ASSR, which formed part of Georgia, spoke Abkhaz and other languages, and were Christian Orthodox or Sunni Muslim.

Organization

The Georgian Legion (*Georgische Legion*) was formed on 24 Feb 1942 in Radom, occupied Poland. The Eastern Legions Formation HQ supervised the creation of 8 Georgian Inf Bns – 795–799 & 822–824. Meanwhile the 162nd Inf Div Command was training 7 Georgian Field Bns; of these, 5 bns – I/1 (Mtn), II/4 (Mtn), I/298, I/9 & II/198 – were completed, and 2 – III/9 & II/125 – were awaiting completion. There were thus 15 completed and 2 incomplete Georgian battalions.

Distinctive insignia

The M1942 Georgian Legion cockade was black (centre), white (intermediate) and red (outer) The first-pattern legion colour was pink, the second-pattern

dark red. Only one type of arm shield was worn, essentially reproducing the flag of the 1918–21 Georgian Democratic Republic: a red or dark-red shield with black-over-white stripes in the first canton, all beneath a white-on-black GEORGIAN title.

ARMENIAN LEGION

Background & population

Armenia is situated in the south-western Caucasus, south of Georgia and Azerbaijan and contiguous with the Turkish border. During the 19th century Eastern Armenia came under Russian rule while Western Armenia was part of the Ottoman Empire. Eastern Armenia declared independence as the Republic of Armenia on 30 May 1918, only to be defeated by the Russian Red Army on 2 Dec 1920 and annexed to Russia, becoming the Armenian SSR on 5 Dec 1936.

Armenians are an ethnic group which includes the population of Nagorny Karabach. They speak Armenian – an independent language group – and the Armenian Apostolic Church is a very ancient Christian community.

Organization

The Armenian Legion (*Armenische Legion*) was formed on 4 July 1942 in Puławy, occupied Poland. The Eastern Legions Formation HQ supervised the creation of 7 Armenian Inf Bns – 808–810 & 812–815 – while 816 was planned but not formed. Meanwhile the 162nd Inf Div Command was training 4 Armenian Field Bns, of which 3 – II/9, I/125 & I/198 – were completed, and III/73 was planned but not formed. There were thus 10 completed and 2 incomplete Armenian units.

Distinctive insignia

The M1942 Armenian Legion cockade was orange (centre), dark blue (intermediate) and red (outer). The legion colour was golden yellow. The only arm shield was the M1942 pattern, essentially the flag of the 1918–20

E

ARMENIAN LEGION

(1) *Hauptfeldwebel*, 809th 'Zeytun' Inf Bn; Aktoprak, Caucasus, November 1942

This senior NCO's basic uniform comprises the M1942 field cap and M1940 tunic both with mouse-grey eagle-and-swastika badges, the former with the legion's cockade and the latter with its arm shield. His rank, equivalent to a British colour-sergeant, is indicated by M1942 (type 1) Security Unit red collar patches entirely edged with NCOs' silver braid, and dark bluish-green shoulder straps with red piping and two longitudinal bars of NCOs' braid. The two stripes of the same braid around each cuff indicate his appointment as company sergeant-major. He carries a captured Soviet PPSh41, with a khaki-drab canvas pouch on his belt for a spare drum-magazine.

(2) *Ober-Yefreytor*, 813th Inf Bn; Dieppe, northern France, February 1944

This 'number 2' of an MG fire-team carries two 300-rd ammunition boxes, and an M1934 double barrel-case on his back. He is armed with both a P08 and a rifle, and has one set of triple rifle-ammunition pouches. Once again, his legion insignia are limited to a cap cockade and arm shield, with M1942 (type 2) rank insignia: dark bluish-green collar patches piped yellow, with silver NCO rank braid on the front and bottom edges; and field-grey shoulder straps piped yellow, bearing a silver German rank star on a transverse bar of rank braid. Note the green button-hole ribbon of the Eastern People's Bronze Medal 2nd Class.

(3) *Podporuchik*, III/523rd Grenadier Regt; Albania, April 1944

Apart from the M1942 Legion arm shield, this second-lieutenant sporting the button-hole ribbon of the Iron Cross 2nd Class wears standard German Army uniform and rank insignia. His M1934 officers' and NCOs' 'old style' field cap has insignia including a German cockade, and infantry-white piping. His faded officers' M1937 white summer walking-out tunic has a dark bluish-green collar with light-grey braids; his flat silver-wire shoulder straps have white underlay; and his M1935 breast eagle is embroidered in aluminium thread on dark bluish-green backing.

3
1
2

This Armenian *Legioner* posing with his 98k rifle in southern Russia, 1943, has the German cap cockade in black/white/red on a dark-green diamond backing. The photo clearly shows the 'Polish' shape of most Eastern Legions' arm shields. The field-grey shoulder strap piped in Armenian golden-yellow identifies the M1942 (type 2) rank insignia. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-198-1394-27A/CC-BY-SA 3.0)

Republic, comprising a shield horizontally striped in red, over dark blue, over orange, all beneath an orange-on-black ARMENIEN title.

NORTH CAUCASUS LEGION

Background

The North Caucasus comprises the territory between the Black and Caspian Seas which had been annexed by the Russian Empire in the 19th century. The region proclaimed independence on 11 May 1918 as the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus (MRNC). The MRNC military forces fought the Tsarist White Army of Gen Anton Denikin, but were defeated by the Russian Red Army on 20 Jan 1921. After a short existence the

Table 5: Armenian Legion, 4 July 1942–8 May 1945

- **808 Armenian Inf Bn** (r. Puławy, Poland, 4.7.1942); with 1 Mtn Div (Nevinnomysk, Caucasus, 9.1942); > **808 Armenian Construction Eng Bn** (Tuapse, 7.10.1942); reduced to an Eng Co (19.11.1942); disbanded Kuban (7.4.1943).
- **809 'Zeytun' Armenian Inf Bn** (r. Puławy, Poland, 29.8.1942); with 13 Pz Div (Caucasus, 10.1942); Aktoprak (21.11.1942); Babugent (3.12.1942); Babugent evacuation (1.1.1943); Taman (5.2.1943); Kherson, Ukraine (23.2.1943); Puławy, Poland (25.4.1943); with 15th Army (Ostend, Belgium, 10.1943); with 128 Gren Regt, 48 Inf Div (17.2.1944); > **III/128 Gren Regt** (19.5.1944); Paris, then Lorraine, France (1944); Trenčín, Slovakia (1945).
- **810 Armenian Inf Bn** (r. Puławy, Poland, 12.1942); Ukraine (1943); with **2 Vol Training** Regt (Mende, France, 1944); Rhône (1944); with 24th Army (France, 1945).
- **812 Armenian Inf Bn** (r. Puławy, Poland, 1.2.1943); Middelharnis, Netherlands, (3.1943); > **I/743 Gren Regt**, 719 Inf Div (19.4.1944); > 812 Armenian Inf Bn (Netherlands, 12.1944); > **812 Armenian Construction Eng Bn** (Netherlands, 1945).
- **813 Armenian Inf Bn** (r. Puławy, Poland, 4.2.1943); with 15th Army (N France, 10.1943); > **III/863 Fort Gren Regt**, 348 Inf Div (Dieppe, Calais, France 19.4.1944); Normandy, France (6.1944); destroyed (8.1944).
- **814 Armenian Inf Bn** (r. Puławy, Poland, 3.5.1943); Zhytomyr, Ukraine (1943); with XXII Mtn Corps, Greece (1944); reduced to **422 Armenian Construction Eng Co**, XX Mtn Corps (Greece, 19.9.1944); disbanded (1944–45).
- **815 Armenian Inf Bn** (r. Puławy, Poland, 24.8.1943); > **III/869 Gren Regt**, 356 Inf Div; Toulon, France (10.1943); N Italy (1944–45); Austria (1945).
- **816 Armenian Inf Bn**, planned summer 1943, probably not formed.

- **II/9 Armenian Field Bn** (r. Puławy, Poland, 8.1942); with 9 Inf Div (Caucasus, 9–12.1942); S Russia (1.1943–4.1944); > **IV/917 Gren Regt**, 242 Inf Div (Toulon, France, 19.9.1944); disbanded (Toulon, 7.10.1944).
- **I/125 Armenian Field Bn** (r. Puławy, Poland, 4.8.1942); with 125 Inf Div (Caucasus, 11.1942), Novorossiysk (2.1943); Kuban (6.1943); Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine (10.1943); > **III/523 Gren Regt**, 297 Inf Div (Tirana, Albania, 19.4.1944); Bosnia (10.1944); Brod, Croatia (1.1945); Celje, Slovenia (5.1945).
- **I/198 Armenian Field Bn** (r. Puławy, Poland, 8.1942); with 198 Inf Div Tuapse, Caucasus; (9.1942); Krasnodar, S Russia (12.1942); Kuban, S Russia (3.1943); Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine (4.1943); Ukraine (6.1943–2.1944); > **IV/198 Gren Regt**, 242 Inf Div (Toulon, France, 19.4.1944); disbanded (Toulon, 7.10.1944).
- **III/73 Armenian Field Bn**; planned but not formed (1942–43).

- 9x Armenian Construction Cos: 5/51, 5/146. 4/248, 4/413, 4/416, 4/538, 4/59, 4/676, 4/797
- 6x Armenian Construction Eng Cos: 4/55, 4/113, 4/114, 5/144, 4/254, 4/257
- 1x Armenian Railway Bridge Construction Co: 4/12
- 9x Armenian Supply Cos: 4/571, 5/501, 5/591, 4/592, 4/602, 4/606, 4/619, 3/720, 4/720

resulting Mountain ASSR was broken up into smaller provinces on 7 July 1924. In 1942 the region comprised: the southern part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic; the Chechen-Ingush, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkar, Kalmyk and North Ossetia ASSRs; and Karachay District. All these provinces were partially occupied by German forces in the Caucasus campaign of 1942.

Populations

The region was a melting-pot for different ethnic groups, usually former nomads conquered by the Russians in the 19th century. They were mainly

Table 6: North Caucasus Legion, 22 July 1942–8 May 1945

800 North Caucasus Inf Bn (r. Wesola, Poland, 15.8.1942); with 125 Inf Div Novorossiysk, S Russia, 8.–10.1942); Kaluzhskaya, Caucasus (11.1942–2.1943); Novorossiysk (2–5.1943); Taman, S Russia (6–10.1943); with 7th Army (Channel Coast, 10.1943); > **I/894 Fort Gren Regt**, 265 Inf Div (Quimper, NW France, 19.4.1944); disbanded (8.1944).
- **801 North Caucasus Inf Bn** (r. Wesola, Poland, 8.1942); 1st Pz Army (Rostov-on-Don, S Russia (9.1942); Caucasus (10–12.1942); Stavropol (12.1942); Taman Peninsula (1–4.1943); part of **III/'Bergmann' Special Unit** (15.4.1943); bn disbanded (22.4.1943).
- **802 North Caucasus Inf Bn** (r. Wesola, Poland, 12.1942); with 3 Pz Div (Kura River, Caucasus, 10.1942; Stoderevskaya, Caucasus (12.1942); with 336 Inf Div (Sea of Asov, summer 1943); Kherson bridgehead (1943); > **III 'Bergmann' Bn** (1944).
- **803 North Caucasus Inf Bn** (r. Wesola, Poland, 4.12.1942); Texel, Netherlands, 2.1943); > **IV/86 Fort Gren Regt**, 347 Inf Div (19.4.1944); > **803 North Caucasus Inf Bn** (Den Helder, Netherlands (8.1944); > **493 Gren Regt**, 219 Inf Div (camouflage title, 3.1945).
- **835 North Caucasus Inf Bn** (r. Wesola, Poland, 25.1.1943); with 15th Army (Channel coast, 1943–1944); > **III/34 (Luftwaffe)/Lt Inf Regt**, 17 Luftwaffe Field Div (19.4.1944); > **835 North Caucasus Construction Eng Bn**, (Netherlands, 1944–8.5.1945).
- **836 North Caucasus Inf Bn** (r. Wesola, Poland, 21.4.1943); with 15th Army (Channel coast, 1943–4.1944); > **I/731 Gren Regt**, 711 Inf Div (Normandy, 6.1944); > **836 North Caucasus Inf Bn** (Aalborg, Denmark, 12.1944–8.5.1945).
- **837 Volga-Finnish Inf Bn** (r. Wesola, Poland, 15.4.1943); Bordeaux, SW France (11.1943); destroyed (Bordeaux, 1944)
- **838 Volga-Finnish Inf Bn** (r. Wesola, Poland, 12.1943); formation not completed.
- **842 North Caucasus Half-Bn** (r. Wesola, Poland, 15.4.1943); > **842 North Caucasus Bn** (Serbia, 3.1944).
- **843 North Caucasus Half-Bn** (r. Wesola, Poland, 15.4.1943) for 281 Security Div (Ukraine); **843 North Caucasus Inf Bn**, with 11 Luftwaffe Field Div (Greece, 11.1944); with 41 Inf Div (Croatia, 1945).

- 1x North Caucasus Field Co: 1/844
- 2x North Caucasus Construction Cos: 4/101, 1005
- 1x North Caucasus Supply Co: 5/546

Christian Orthodox, Sunni and Shia Muslim, speaking a variety of Turkic, Caucasian and Iranian languages. Five main ethnic groups, with their most significant sub-groups, are identified as follows: Abkhazians (Adygeans, Balkars, Chechens, Cherkessians, Ingush, Kabardians, Karachays, Kumyks and Nogais); Avars (Achvachs, Andiys, Bagvalals, Botlichs, Chamalales, Chvarshines, Didoyans, Godoberins, Karatines and Tindalians); and Dargines.

The Volga Finns, primarily represented by the Mari and Mordvin communities, are ethnic Finns living along the upper Volga River and speaking a Uralic language related to Finnish. As northern European Russian Orthodox Christians, they had little in common with the Caucasian tribes, but due to their small numbers they were allocated to the North Caucasus Legion for administrative convenience.

Organization

The North Caucasus Legion (*Nordkaukasische Legion*) was formed on 22 July 1942 at Wesola, occupied Poland, from northern Caucasian ethnic groups transferred from the Georgian Legion. The Eastern Legions Formation HQ trained 9 North Caucasus Inf Bns. of which 8 were completed – 800–803, 835–836, 837 Volga-Finnish, & 842–843 (originally half-bns) – while 838

Northern France, Oct 1943: a North Caucasian *Kapitan* (left) in conversation with a German cadre *Oberleutnant*. Unusually at this early date, the North Caucasian is wearing an officer's M1935 service cap, probably with this Legion's light-brown crown-seam and cap-band piping. He displays M1942 (type 2) rank insignia, with the narrow silver-wire shoulder straps without gold rank knot, introduced on 15 Sept 1943, and the M1943 *Bergkaukasien* arm shield depicting 3 horses' heads around a ring. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-296-1700-06/Müller, Karl/CC-BY-SA 3.0)

was planned but not completed. There were no North Caucasus Legion bns in the 162nd Inf Div Command.

Distinctive insignia

The M1942 North Caucasus Legion cockade was white (centre), orange (intermediate) and white (outer). The first- and second-pattern legion colour was brown.

There were two patterns of arm shield. The M1942 – essentially the 1918–21 MRNC flag – was halved horizontally green over red, with a white crescent and 7 white stars in the first canton, all beneath a white-on-black NORDKAUKASIEN title. The M1943 pattern featured a yellow

Table 7: Volga Tatar Legion, 25 November 1942–8 May 1945

- **825 Volga Tatar Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, 25.11.1942); Eastern Front (1942–44); 3 Pz Div (Pomerania, Germany, 1945).
- **627 Eastern Inf Bn** (r. Central Russia 11.1942), Army Group Centre; Roslavl (1.1943); with 346 Inf Div (St Malo, W France, 10.1943); > **627 Volga Tatar Inf Bn** (12.1943); disbanded after mutiny (1.7.1944); > **627 Eastern Inf Bn** with 15th Army (Lower Rhine, 1945).
- **826 Volga Tatar Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland 15.1.1943); Breda, Netherlands (3.1943); > **IV/723 Gren Regt**, 719 Inf Div (19.4.1944); > **826 Volga Tatar Inf Bn** with 25th Army (Breda, Netherlands (12.1944); disbanded (8.5.1945).
- **827 Volga Tatar Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland 10.2.1943); Mons, Belgium (7.1943); Aachen, W Germany with 716 Inf Div (1945); Swabia, SW Germany (4.1945).
- **828 Volga Tatar Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland 1.6.1943); > **828 Volga Tatar Construction Eng Bn** with 2nd Army (Narew, Belarus, 1944); West Prussia, Germany (1945).
- **829 Volga Tatar Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland 24.8.1943); Eastern Front (1943–44); disbanded (24.8.1944).
- **830 Volga Tatar Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, autumn 1943); > **830 Volga Tatar Construction Eng Bn** (1944); Pomerania, E Germany (1945).
- **831 Volga Tatar Inf Bn** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, autumn 1943); Bautzen, E Germany (1945).
- **832–4 Volga Tatar Inf Bns** (r. Jedlnia, Poland, autumn, 1943); formation doubtful.

- 9x Volga-Tatar Construction Cos: 4/100, 2/153, 4/306, 3/553, 4/677, 4/776, 1 & 2/825, 830
- 3x Volga-Tatar Supply Cos: 3/47, 2/734, 1003

3-headed horse-and-ring device on a blue shield. The upper title changed to a yellow-on-black BERGKAUKASIEN ('Mountainous Caucasus'), but the unit retained the title 'North Caucasus Legion' until May 1945.

VOLGA-TATAR LEGION

Background & population

The Volga-Tatars inhabit Tatarstan (capital, Kazan) and adjacent districts on the River Volga in central Russia, which had been part of the Russian Empire since the 16th century. Tatar nationalists established the Idel-Ural ('Volga-Ural') State on 1 Mar 1918, but on 28 Mar it was conquered by the Russian Red Army, and the Soviet government proclaimed the Tatar ASSR on 27 May 1920. The Legion recruited Bashkirs, Chuvash, Kazan-Tatars,

F

NORTH CAUCASUS LEGION

(1) *Stellvertretender Kompanieführer*, 802nd Inf Bn; Mozdok, Caucasus, September 1942

This officer wears a Caucasian lambswool *kubanka* cap without insignia. His M1942 field-grey tunic has an M1942 arm shield, M1942 (type 1) red collar patches with silver NCO braid edging and bar, and narrow silver-wire shoulder straps. He wears M1940 enlisted ranks' field-grey trousers and M1939 short-shaft marching boots, and an officer's M1938 brown belt.

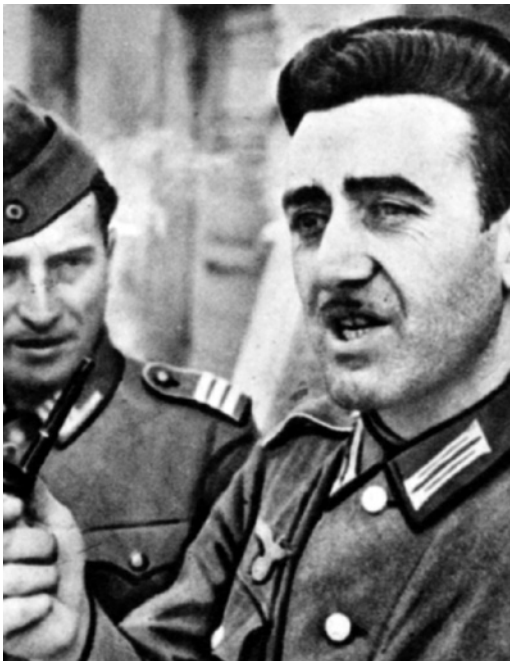
(2) *Ober-Legioner*, 842nd Inf Bn; Serbia, March 1944

This senior private wears a field-grey M1943 field cap with a mouse-grey eagle badge above the legion cockade. His contrasting M1942 reed-green summer tunic has an M1943 Legion arm shield, and M1942 (type 2) rank insignia. The dark bluish-green collar patches and field-grey shoulder straps are piped in this Legion's light brown, and the latter have a silver rank star at the outer end. He wears standard infantry rifle equipment, including the M1931 water-bottle and bread-bag, and carries a stick-grenade thrust under his belt.

(3); *Ober-Fel'dfebel'*, I/894 Fort Gren Regt; Quimper, north-west France, August 1944

This senior NCO platoon commander in Brittany is by this date wearing German uniform complete with rank insignia. He has an M1942 steel helmet, and an M1943 field-grey tunic with mouse-grey eagle, collar braids and NCO *Tresse.* and infantry-white shoulder-strap piping. His origin is shown only by his M1943 Legion arm shield, and the green-and-white ribbon of the Eastern People's Silver Service Medal 2nd Class.

3
1
2



Legioner Iven Koelkaanen (right) was a Karelian Finn serving in the Volga-Tatar Legion, late 1943. Even at this date he has been issued the much earlier M1936 5-button tunic with dark bluish-green collar, M1938 light-grey machine-woven collar braids, M1939 silver-grey breast eagle and M1940 field-grey shoulder straps with infantry-white piping. His companion, a *Fel'dfebel'*, displays Eastern People's M1942 (2) rank insignia.
(Author's collection)

Ufa-Tatars and Udmurts, who were Turkic-speaking Sunni Muslims; and Mari and Mordvins, who were Uralic-speaking Christian Orthodox.

Organization

The Volga-Tatar Legion (*Wolgatatarische Legion*) was formed on 25 Nov 1942 at Jedlnia, occupied Poland. The Eastern Legions Formation HQ supervised the training of 11 Volga-Tatar Inf Bns; of these, 8 bns – 627 & 825–831 – were completed, and 3 bns – 832–834 – were planned but not completed. The 162nd Inf Div Command did not recruit any Volga-Tatar Legion battalions.

Distinctive insignia

The M1942 Volga-Tatar Legion cockade was dark blue (centre) and green (outer). There was no first-pattern legion colour, but the second-pattern piping was green-and-blue 'twist' cord.

There were three types of arm patches. The M1942 was a light-blue oval with orange inset edging, and an orange horizontal bow and vertical arrow between orange IDiL-URAL upper and TATAR LEGIONI lower titles. The M1943 patch was a 'French-style' shield, halved blue over green within a wide black border, with white crossed bayonet and arrow, all beneath a prominent white-on-black IDEL-URAL title. The M1944 shield differed slightly in shape; halved blue over green with a lemon-yellow border, it bore a crossed pair of white curved daggers and a vertical arrow, below an orange IDEL-URAL title.

CAMPAIGN DEPLOYMENTS

Overview: Caucasus campaign, June–December 1942

On 28 June 1942, from a front west of the River Donets roughly from Kursk down to Stalino, Army Group South launched the Caucasus offensive codenamed Operation 'Blue' (*Unternehmen Blau*), later Operation 'Brunswick' (*Unternehmen Braunschweig*). On 9 July the army group split into Army Groups 'A' (in the south) and 'B' (in the north).

In Operation *Edelweiß,* Army Group 'A' entered the Caucasus region via the River Don bend on 23 July 1942, with the objective of reaching the Baku oilfields on the Caspian Sea. It comprised 22 German division:
1st Pz Army (1 Mtn Div; 3, 13 & 23 Pz Divs; 16 Mot Div; 97 & 101 Lt Divs; 50, 111 & 370 Inf Divs)
11th Army (28 Lt Div; 24, 46, 50, 72 & 132 Inf Divs)
17th Army (1 & 4 Mtn Divs; 97 & 101 Lt Divs; 9, 73, 111, 125, 198, 298 & 370 Inf Divs).

1st Pz Army fanned out eastwards and southwards, taking Stavropol on 4 Aug; Maykop and Mineralnye Vody on 9 Aug; Pyatigorsk on 15 Aug, and Mozdok on 24 Aug. It then halted in the face of stiffening Red Army resistance in the Caucasus Mountains, which blocked German access to the southern Caucasus. German tanks briefly occupied parts of Ordzhonikidze (now Vladikavkaz) on 3–11 Nov, but 1st Pz Army's advance was checked.

From 31 Dec the Panzers retreated to Rostov-on-Don, to avoid being outflanked on the north as the German Stalingrad front began to collapse. 17th Army took Krasnodar on 9 Aug 1942 and Novorossiysk on 10 Sept, but was also halted in the Caucasus Mountains, finally retreating on 31 Dec to the Kuban bridgehead near Crimea. 11th Army was broken up in Sept 1942, while 3rd Rumanian Army supported German forces at Novorossiysk and in the Caucasus Mountains.

On 1 Feb 1943, 1st Pz Army reached Taganrog, Ukraine, and by 12 Feb 1943 all German forces had evacuated the Caucasus. Army Group 'A' had occupied most of northern Caucasus for seven months, but had failed to overrun oil facilities at Maykop or to cross the Caucasus Mountains to reach Turkestan.

Meanwhile, to the north, *Unternehmen Fischreiher* (Operation 'Grey Heron') saw Army Group 'B' advancing along the River Don, skirting the

A *Legioner* of the Volga-Tatar Legion on parade, 1942 (left), displaying both the Legion's M1942 arm patch and, oddly at this date, full German collar and breast insignia and shoulder straps on his M1940 tunic; his comrade lacks the arm patch and breast eagle. This unit carry Russian Moisin-Nagant M1891/30 rifles. (Tchakov Collection)

Poland, 1943: a German cadre company commander (the only man wearing the M1943 field cap) discusses battle tactics with Azerbaijan legionaries. The official at far left, wearing an M1938 officer's silver-piped field cap, *Sonderführer's* narrow shoulder straps and pentagonal silver-embroidered 'Old Prussian' collar-patches, is a *Dolmetscher (Z)* interpreter, working between German and Russian. The Azerbaijan Legion fielded 14 infantry and field battalions, plus 1 'Bergmann' special unit; fighting on both Eastern and Western Fronts, it shared with the Turkestan Legion a good combat reputation.
(Tchakov Collection)

northern Caucasus and heading for Stalingrad and Astrakhan. It comprised 20 German divs:
4th Pz Army (14 Pz Div; 16 & 29 Mot Divs; 71, 94, 297 & 371 Inf Divs)
6th Army (14 & 16 Pz Divs; 100 Lt Div; 44, 62, 71, 76, 79, 94, 113, 294, 295, 297, 305, 371, 376, 384 & 389 Inf Divs).

4th Pz Army secured the Kalmyk Region north-east of the Caucasus during Nov–Dec 1942. Meanwhile, 6th Army advanced to the lower Volga River, fighting for Stalingrad until its eventual annihilation (23 Aug 1942–2 Feb 1943).

Eastern Legions: the Caucasus, Kalmykia & Stalingrad, June 1942–February 1943

Five Eastern Legions (excluding the Volga-Tatars) contributed 20 bns to the unsuccessful 227-day Caucasian campaign.

The Turkestan Legion sent its 450, 452, 472, 781 & 811 Inf, and I/370 Field Bns. The Turkestan 450, 472, 811 Inf & I/370 Field Bns defended positions in Kalmykia under German 16 Mot Div, but morale deteriorated after a defeat at Yashkul in Dec 1942. The 452 & 781 Inf Bns took part in unsuccessful attacks on Tuapse on the Black Sea coast in Oct and Dec 1942 respectively.

The Azerbaijan Legion deployed five units – 804, 805 & 806 Inf, and I/73 & I/111 Field Bns. 804, 805 & 806 fought in the mountains, 804 then engaging partisans behind the lines. I/73 fought in the northern Caucasus in Jan 1943, and I/111 in the Caucasus Mountains in Dec 1942 before retreating north.

The Georgian Legion's combat record was disappointing, reinforcing Hitler's prejudice that Muslims made better fighters than Christians. 795 & 796 Inf and I/9 & II/4 Field Bns were sent to the Caucasus. 795 acquired a poor reputation in Sept 1942, which improved after reorganization in December. 796 Bn performed so badly in the Caucasus Mountains in Oct 1942 that it was reorganized as a Supply Bn in Dec 1942. I/9 & II/4 were diverted from the Caucasus front after demonstrating lack of fighting spirit.

The Armenian Legion deployed its 808 & 809 Inf Bns, with contrasting results. During its advance through the Caucasus to reinforce the élite German 1 Mtn Div, 808 Bn suffered from such poor discipline and multiple desertions that it was reorganized as a Construction Pioneer Co in Nov 1942. 809 Bn, however, was one of the best Eastern Legion units, showing impressive fighting spirit. By Nov 1942 it had advanced into the Caucasus Mountains, and captured Babugent village after three days' heavy fighting in Dec 1942. However, the strategic retreat from the Caucasus in Jan 1943 affected its morale badly.

The 800, 801 & 802 North Caucasus Inf Bns fought in the campaign. 800 Bn advanced with 125 Inf Div, reaching the front at Kaluzhskaya and immediately suffering heavy losses; it would leave the Caucasus with an impressive combat record. By contrast, 801 Bn served with no particular distinction. 802 reached the front in Nov 1942, and earned praise in heavy fighting on 19 Dec, when the bn successfully defended their positions against an armoured attack.

Ten bns, all from the Turkestan Legion, fought at Stalingrad between 28 Aug 1942 and 12 Feb 1943. Of these, I/94, I/295 & I/305 were destroyed; I/371 Bn survived; I/29 was disbanded; I/44 was re-formed as I/303 Gren Regt, I/100 as IV/236 Arty Regt, I/297 as II/303 Gren Regt, I/384 as III/303 Gren Regt, and I/305 as 162 Divisional Battalion.

In all, six Azerbaijan battalions were deployed to France in 1943-44. Here, Azerbaijan legionaries proudly display a French Resistance flag – a tricolour bearing the words 'La France Combatante' amongst other lettering – captured during an anti-guerrilla sweep in the south-east. The *Zugführer* (third from left) wears an M1943 field cap, and a 6-button M1942 tunic customized with a dark blueish-green collar, unusually worn open over a white shirt and grey necktie. His M1942 (type 2) rank insignia, piped light green, include shoulder straps on which the two longitudinal silver-braid bars are just visible. Apart from the *Stellvertretender Gruppenführer* (second from right), the other soldiers all wear German insignia. (Wikimedia Commons/ Azerbaijan Legion)

Crimea, Ukraine & southern Russia, January 1943–April 1944

Following the Stalingrad defeat German forces, including 24 Eastern Legion bns, retreated northwards into Crimea, Ukraine and southern Russia. Turkestan I/370, Azerbaijan 806 & I/73, and Georgian II/4 were stationed in Crimea. Turkestan 452, 783 & 784, Azerbaijan 804, Armenian I/125 & I/198 were stationed in southern Russia and later Ukraine. Turkestan 781, 811 & I/370, Azerbaijan 807 & I/111, Georgian I/9 & II/198, and Armenian 809 & 810 stayed in Ukraine. Turkestan 450, Azerbaijan 805 & I/73, Armenian 808 & II/9, North Caucasus 800 & 801 remained in southern Russia.

Central & northern Russia, Belarus, Poland & Slovakia, February 1943–October 1944

Of 19 Eastern Legion bns that fought in the retreat from Crimea, Ukraine and southern Russia, some incurred levels of casualties which led to their disbandment.

Georgian I/1, Turkestan 785 & 786 and Volga-Tatar 828 Eng served in Central Russia and Belarus, after which I/1 & 786 were disbanded. A total of 10 bns returned to Command HQ in Poland for retraining: Georgian 795; Azerbaijan 806, 807 & 817–819; Turkestan 781, 782 & 791; and Volga-Tatar 831. Azerbaijan I/111 fought against the Warsaw Uprising in Aug 1944. Command HQ attempted to form 17 new bns – Azerbaijan 820, 821 & IV/101 (Lt); Turkestan 721–714, 839–841, I/71, I/97, I/113 & I/376; and Volga-Tatar 832–834 – but failed to complete them. Meanwhile 5 bns – Turkestan 783 & 788–790, and Volga-Tatar 829 – were disbanded.

Northern Europe, February 1943–December 1944

In all 26 Eastern Legion units served in France between Feb 1943 and Oct 1944. Of these, 11 bns defended or supported the Channel coast: Armenian 809 (Paris); Armenian 813 (Normandy); Georgian 795 > IV/739 Fort Gren Regt; Georgian 797 > I/739 Gren Regt; Georgian 798 &799; N Caucasus 800 > I/894 Fort Gren Regt; Turkestan 781 & 782. Volga-Tatar 627 and Volga-Finnish 837 guarded France's Atlantic coast, but 627 was disbanded on 1 July 1944 after a mutiny.

G

VOLGA-TATAR LEGION

(1) *Stellvertretender Zugführer*, 825th Inf Bn; Jedlnia, Poland, November 1942

This sergeant deputy platoon commander, supervising recruits' basic training, wears an M1934 field cap with the Legion's M1942 cockade below the mouse-grey woven eagle-and-swastika badge. His M1940 tunic has M1942 (type 1) collar and shoulder-strap rank insignia (as Chart 2), and the Legion's M1942 right sleeve patch (as Chart 1). His German Army enlisted ranks' belt, with pebbled-finish aluminium buckle-plate, supports a holstered P08.

(2) *Zugführer*, 627th Inf Bn; St Malo, north-west France, March 1944

A second-lieutenant platoon commander in an Atlantic coast garrison, he wears an M1943 peaked field cap again with the Legion's cockade below the eagle. His economy M1942 enlisted ranks' tunic still bears M1942 (type 2) rank insignia as Chart 3, the dark bluish-green collar patches being edged with silver NCO braid inside the Legion's green/blue twist piping. He now displays the 1943 arm shield (see Chart 1). He wears M1943 trousers, and the previous figure's M1939 short-shaft marching boots have been replaced with canvas anklets and M1934 ankle boots.

(3) *Ober-Yefreytor*, 828th Construction Eng Bn; Narew River line, Belarus, October 1944

Serving in a unit demoted from infantry to second-line engineers, this senior private has been issued an obsolete M1916 helmet. His field-grey M1940 double-breasted greatcoat has field-grey shoulder straps piped in engineer-black *Waffenfarbe*; the Volga-Tatars' third-pattern or M1944 arm shield; and mouse-grey braid rank chevrons on field-grey backing.

1
2
3

August 1944: a company from I/111 Field Bn, Azerbaijan Legion, awaits orders to attack during the Warsaw Uprising. They are wearing M1942 steel helmets, some with wide-mesh string camouflage netting; M1942 tunics with mouse-grey German insignia, and no visible arm shields; M1940 trousers, and M1939 marching boots; the man at far right has an M1943 field cap tucked under his belt. Each of the two section MG42-gunners is accompanied by two men carrying link ammo-belts around their necks. This 'Dönmec' Bn was raised in the field on the Caucasus Front by 111. Inf Div late in 1942; it saw prolonged and heavy combat in several campaigns, before eventually surrendering to the British liberation forces in Denmark in Apr 1945, by which date it was designated III/1607 Gren Regt. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-695-0425-13/Leher/CC-BY-SA 3.0)

A total of 8 bns carried out security duties against the French Resistance, and later defended the Mediterranean coast against the Allied landings of Aug 1944: Armenian 815 > III/869 Gren Regt; Armenian IV/917 Gren Regt; Armenian I/198 > IV/918 Gren Regt; Azerbaijan I/73, 804, 806 & 807; and Georgian II/198. Seven bns were assigned to the Vol Depot Div for training: Armenian 810, Azerbaijan 806 & I/73, Georgian II/4 & I/9, and Turkestan 783 & I/370.

Of 10 bns which served elsewhere in northern Europe during Feb 1943–Dec 1944, Georgian 823 garrisoned Guernsey in the Channel Islands; 3 bns defended the coast of Belgium – Armenian 809, Turkestan 781 and Volga-Tatar 827; and 6 garrisoned the Netherlands – Armenian I/743, Georgian 822, North Caucasus 803 & 835 Eng, Volga-Tatar 826, and Turkestan 787.

Southern Europe, February 1943–December 1944

In northern **Italy**, 11 bns served in the 162nd Turkestan Inf Div on coastal defence and anti-partisan duties: Azerbaijan I/4 (Mtn), I/97 (Lt), I/100 (Lt), I/101 (Lt), 804 & 806; Turkestan I/29, I/44, I/297 (Mtn), I/384 & 162 Div Bn; and Armenian 815. In the Balkans, Armenian 814 and Turkestan 789 fought in **Greece**; N Caucasus 842 and Turkestan 786 in **Serbia**; and Armenian I/125 and Turkestan III/359 in **Montenegro**, **Albania** and **Croatia**.

January–May 1945

At least 28 Eastern Legion units were still on active service in 1945. There were 4 bns in **western Germany** – Azerbaijan 817, Georgian 798, Turkestan 782 and Volga-Tatar 827. The garrison of **Denmark** included Azerbaijan II 'Bergmann' & I/111, Georgian 799 and N Caucasus 836. Meanwhile,

Georgian 822 staged a mutiny against its German cadre on Texel Island, **Netherlands**, which lasted 5 Apr–20 May 1945. On the Oder Front in **eastern Germany**, 9 bns were fighting – Azerbaijan 786, 818 & 819; Turkestan 790 & 791, Volga-Tatar 825, 828, 831 & 830 Eng. In central and south-eastern Europe, 4 bns were operating against local partisans – Armenian 809 in **Slovakia**; Armenian I/125 and Georgian III/523 Gren Regt in **Slovenia**; and N Caucasus 843 in **Croatia**. Meanwhile, 3 bns surrendered to British forces in **Austria** – 2 Turkestan Legion, Georgian II/198 and Armenian 815 >III/869 Grenadier Regiment.

CRIMEAN TATAR FORCES

Background & population

The Crimean peninsula lies on the northern Black Sea coast south-west of the Sea of Azov. On 21 July 1783, Tsarist Russia had annexed Crimea from the Ottoman Empire. On 13 Dec 1917 Crimean Tatar leaders proclaimed the Crimean People's Republic, which was overrun by the Russian Red Army in Jan 1918. The territory was then ruled by a series of short-lived pro-Bolshevik and White Russian governments, including two Crimean nationalist regimes – the pro-German 1st Crimean Regional Government (25 June–25 Nov 1918) and the anti-Bolshevik 2nd Crimean Regional Government (26 Nov 1918–1 Apr 1919). None of these entities is thought to have established armed forces. Finally, the Crimean ASSR was established (18 Oct 1921–30 June 1945) as part of the RSFSR.

The original German caption describes these volunteers as Volga Tatars in 1942, but as that Legion was formed in Nov 1942 the correct date must be later. Their M1942 reed-green twill tunics have M1940 mouse-grey machine-woven thread collar braids but no breast eagles. Their M1942 (type 2) shoulder straps are field-grey with Legion piping, and (left) the single silver NCO-braid bar of a *Stellvertretender Gruppenführer*. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1995-043-14/Philipps/CC-BY-SA 3.0)

Crimea, 1942: a German *Unteroffizier* leads a platoon from a Tatar Self-Defence company on a route march; 14 such local companies had been formed by the spring of that year. The Tatars are wearing M1934 field caps without insignia, and M1935 greatcoats with dark bluish-green collars, over M1933 off-white twill fatigue uniforms with canvas anklets and ankle boots. The white left-arm brassard bears in black the words '*Im Dienst/ der/Deutschen Wehrmacht*'. The volunteers have been issued German belts and pouches, but Russian Mosin-Nagant M1891/30 rifles. Although the instructor is an Army NCO, these companies were raised by the SD. (Tchakov Collection)

In 1941 the population was 301,000 Russians (42 per cent), and Sunni Muslim Turkic minorities including 179,000 Tatars (26 per cent), Nogais and Qarai Turks.

The war in Crimea

Crimea was the scene of some of the bloodiest battles of World War II. On 21 Sept 1941, German 11th and Rumanian 3rd and 4th Armies invaded Crimea across the Perekop isthmus, and swiftly conquered the whole peninsula except for Sevastopol, whose garrison held out for 8 months (30 Oct 1941–4 July 1942). Hitler had planned to evacuate Crimea's population and repopulate it with German settlers, although official German policy was to hint at possible future autonomy for the Tatars in exchange for military co-operation. Crimea became the 'Tauride' District (*Generalbezirk Tauride*) within Ukraine Autonomous Province.

Crimea was recaptured by the Red Army 4th Ukrainian Front on 12 May 1944, and from 18 May the Soviet government deported the Crimean Tatar population to Central Asia to punish their collaboration with the Germans.

Crimean Tatar village militia, October–December 1941

As early as Oct 1941 Crimean Tatar POWs and volunteers were offering to act as guides for the German Army against the Red Army and partisan forces. Consequently, on 18 Jan 1942 the German General Staff retrospectively authorized the unlimited formation of Crimean Tatar village guards and anti-partisan units with German Army cadres.

About 4,000 men were organized in at least 9 village militia units, named after their villages: Koush (Nov 1941); Bashi, Eni-Sala, Karasu-Bashi,

Kuchuk-Ulsen, Molbay, Sultan-Sarai, Tuak, Uskut and others (Dec 1941). The volunteers wore civilian clothes with a white armband on the left upper sleeve lettered in black 'In the Service of the German Armed Forces' ('*Im Dienst der Deutschen Wehrmacht*').

Self-Defence companies, January–July 1942

From Jan 1942 the village militia units were reorganized as Tatar Self-Defence (*Tatarischer Selbtschutz*) companies, 70–100 strong, under the command of the German *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD – the SS Intelligence Service) – and reporting to *Einsatzgruppe D* (one of the notorious Action Groups which carried out summary mass executions). Eight Self-Defence Cos were formed, named after the towns where they were headquartered: Alushta, Bachtshissarai, Evpoatoria, Karassubasar, Simferopol, St Krim, Sudak and Yalta. By Mar 1942 there were a further six units.

Personnel wore German Army M1935, M1940 and M1941 uniforms and basic belt equipment. Insignia comprised collar braids and the 'In Service of the German Armed Forces' brassard, but no cap eagles or cockades, breast eagles, rank insignia or (usually) shoulder straps.

Auxiliary Police, October 1942–March 1944

In Oct 1942 the SD reorganized the Self-Defence companies into Auxiliary Police (*Schutzmannschaft* – abbreviated to *Schuma*) battalions. There were 10 units, including 3 Front (*Front-*), 1 Guard (*Wach-*), and 2 Replacement (*Ersatz-*) battalions. Based in eastern Crimea, these saw hard fighting against the Red Army. Although each bn had only a minimal German cadre (1 officer and 8 NCOs), they earned a good combat reputation. Nevertheless, in Mar 1943 the Germans decided that there were too few Crimean Tatars to establish a Crimean Tatar Legion on the Eastern Legion model.

The Schuma bns were: 147 Guard Bn, Simferopol (10.1942–7.1943); 148 Front Bn, Karassubasara (10.1942–7.1943); 149 Front Bn, Bachtshissarai (10.1942–7.1943); 150 Replacement Bn, Yalta (10.1942–3.1944); 151 Front Bn, Alushta (10.1942–7.1943); 152 Bn, Dzhankoy (10.1942–7.1943); 153 Bn, Feodosia (10.1942–2.1944); 154 Replacement Bn, Simferopol (10.1942–7.1943); 155 Bn, Simferopol (11.1942–1.1943); and 156 Bn, Simferopol (11.1942–1.1943). Additionally, 2 or 3 Construction Eng and 2 or 3 Supply bns were formed.

Crimean Tatar Auxiliary Police wore M1942 black or field-grey Schutzmannschaft uniforms with M1942 collar rank insignia, and used German *Schuma* rank titles.[3] A light-blue 'Polish-style' right arm shield was

Timur Gallamov, a member of the Crimean Tatar Self-Defence companies, wearing a field-grey prewar field cap from which all insignia have been removed, and the badgeless M1933 twill fatigue uniform. The muzzle detail identifies his weapon as a Tokarev SVT40 semi-automatic rifle. (Author's collection)

3 For examples of Ukrainian *Schuma* uniforms and insignia, see MAA 242, *Partisan Warfare 1941–45,* Plate B2 & B3 and pages 29–30.

By contrast, these members of the Crimean *Tatarischer Selbtschutz* have been issued khaki Latvian Army M1930 field caps with distinctive ear-flaps. The tunics with shoulder straps but no insignia are difficult to identify exactly, but may be German M1940. (Author's collection)

probably intended, but was never worn; edged field-grey, it bore a red Tatar 'Tamga' tripod motif with equal-length black legs.

Waffen-SS units, March 1944–May 1945

In Mar 1944, Himmler ordered the German Police to organize the remnants of the Crimean Tatar Auxiliary Police into the 3-bn Tatar Mountain Regt (*Tataren-Gebirgsjäger-Regiment*). The regt first saw action on 11 Apr 1944 at Dzahankoy, northern Crimea, then at Barangar on 14 Apr, and finally at Simferopol, before being shipped out to Rumania by May 1944. On 8 July 1944 the Tatars formed the Armed SS Mountain Bde (1st Tatar). In Hungary in Sept 1944 this *Waffen-Gebirgs-Brigade der SS* (*tatarische Nr. 1*) numbered 2,421 troops, including 1,097 locally recruited Hungarian ethnic Germans. Exhibiting declining morale, the bde was disbanded on 1 Jan 1945. In Feb the Tatars were re-formed into the 2-bn 'Crimea' Armed Group, and were assigned to the East Turkic Armed SS Unit (see pages 16–17). They fought in Slovakia in Mar 1945, in Italy in Apr, and surrendered to British forces in Austria in May 1945.

Tatar personnel wore standard Waffen-SS or Army field-grey uniforms. The field cap bore the silver-grey skull on the front and the SS eagle above it or on the left flap. The SS eagle was worn on the left upper sleeve. Standard Waffen-SS rank insignia were worn on the shoulder straps or the left sleeve, and on the left collar patch. German cadre personnel wore SS-runes on the right collar patch, and had 'SS'-prefixed ranks. For Tatar personnel a silver wolf's-head badge was designed for the right collar patch, but was never issued; they wore a blank right collar patch, and used '*Waffen-*' prefixed ranks.

Two patterns of Crimean Waffen-SS woven arm shields of French 'squared' pattern were manufactured for wear on the left forearm, but were never in fact issued. The first was red edged with black, bearing a black Tatar 'Tamga' tripod with a longer middle leg; the second was blue edged with black, bearing a red 'Tamga' edged white with equal legs.

H

CRIMEAN TATAR & KALMYK UNITS

(1) Volunteer, Crimean Tatar Self-Defence Company; Alushta, Crimea, March 1942

This volunteer wears German Army uniform with insignia and shoulder straps removed, although the reversed chevron of infantry-white braid is still visible on his M1934 field cap. His allegiance is shown by the black-on-white '*Im Dienst der Deutschen Wehrmacht*' brassard worn around the left arm of his M1935 greatcoat. His rifle is a captured Red Army Mosin-Nagant M1891/30, but he has been issued a German belt with M1933 ammunition pouches.

(2) *Waffen-Unterscharführer*, SS Armed Mountain Bde (Tatar No.1); Hungary, September 1944

This Crimean Tatar section commander serves in the unit formed by the Waffen-SS from the remnants of Crimean *Schuma* Auxiliary Police battalions. Although he wears no SS sleeve eagle, he does have regulation collar patches; either this blank right patch or the SS-runes patch were worn, since no national badge was awarded. Silver NCO braid edges both the collar and the field-grey shoulder straps, the latter being piped infantry-white. It is probable that a 'French-style' M1944 square-shaped red or blue shield with the 'Tamga' symbol (see Chart 1) was manufactured for wear on the left forearm, but not issued.

(3) *Unteroffizier*, Dr Doll's Kalmyk Unit; Ulan Tug, Kalmykia, December 1942

The Kalmyks all wore German uniforms and insignia, with golden-yellow cavalry *Waffenfarbe*. This section commander has unofficially added a German officer's silver-on-green embroidered breast eagle to his black lambswool *kubanka* cap. His 5-button M1940 tunic has mouse-grey collar braids and breast eagle; the collar and field-grey shoulder straps have mouse-grey NCO braid edging, the latter with yellow piping.

3
2
1

A Kalmyk cavalryman, wearing German field-grey cavalry uniform with basic factory-applied collar and breast insignia machine-woven in mouse-grey, and yellow-piped field-grey shoulder straps. His belt is the brown M1938 officers' pattern. (Tchakov Collection)

Although this was nominally a mountain unit, it is doubtful that the M1943 SS Edelweiß badge was worn on the right upper sleeve and left side of the field cap.

KALMYK FORCES

Background & population

Kalmykia is an autonomous republic in the north-eastern Caucasus close to the Caspian Sea, with Volgograd (1925–61, Stalingrad) to the north and Astrakhan to the east. The Kalmyks had migrated to the region from southern Siberia in about 1630, and were absorbed by the Russian Empire in 1771. Kalmyk anti-Bolshevik and pro-White forces were unable to form a Kalmyk state during the political chaos of 1917–20, which was followed by Bolshevik oppression. The Kalmyk Autonomous *Oblast* (District) was established on 4 Nov 1920, becoming the Kalmyk ASSR on 22 Oct 1935. The ASSR was abolished on 27 Dec 1943, and thereafter the entire Kalmyk population was deported to Central Asia and Siberia as punishment for collaborating with the Germans.

Kalmykia was unique in being settled by Mongolian Buddhist nomads, speaking a Mongolian language. In 1939 Kalmykia's population was 221,000, including 107,000 Kalmyks (48 per cent) and 101,000 Russians (45 per cent).

ORGANIZATION & CAMPAIGNS

By July 1942 the German 16th Mot Div, advancing south-eastwards into the eastern Caucasus, was increasingly exposed to flanking attacks from Red Army forces. In mid-Aug German Intelligence formed Abwehrtrupp 103 under Specialist Lt (Sonderführer (Z)) Othmar Rudolf Vrba (codename 'Dr Otto Doll'), a cultural specialist and linguist, to command two 150-man Kalmyk cavalry sqns on anti-partisan duties. Unlike in other parts of the occupied Soviet Union, the Germans made a genuine attempt to gain the friendship of the Kalmyks, granting the district administrative autonomy, economic and religious freedom, and German Army equivalent status for the cavalry.

October 1942–July 1943

On 17 Oct 1942 the OKH formed two Kalmyk Cavalry Sqns (*1. & 2. Kalmückenschwadron 66*). The Kalmyks impressed the German officers with their skill and fighting spirit, securing 16th Mot Div's flanks from Red Army regular forces and partisans. However, by Jan 1943 the tide had turned and the Red Army, victorious at Stalingrad, was advancing into the Kalmyk steppe, forcing 16th Mot Div back towards Ukraine. On 14 Jan the retreating Kalmyk forces were redesignated 'Dr Doll's Kalmyk Bn' (*Kalmücken-Abteilung Dr. Doll*), although the unofficial German title was 'Kalmyk Legion'; it now had 6 numbered squadrons.

By Feb 1943 the Kalmyks had retreated to Taganrog, on the Sea of Azov, where they continued anti-partisan duties and were redesignated 'Dr Doll's Kalmyk Unit' ((*Kalmücken-Verband Dr. Doll*), although the Kalmyks called themselves the Kalmyk Cavalry Corps (*Kalmyskiy Kavaleriyskiy Korpus – KKK*). In Apr 1943 the KKK, with 79 Kalmyk officers, 353 NCOs and 2,290 men, 2,030 horses and Bactrian camels, was on coastal watch

A Kalmyk volunteer in winter dress, Jan 1943. He wears a local fur cap, a German M1940 field-grey greatcoat without shoulder straps, the German Army enlisted ranks' belt, and a Russian Maxim machine-gun feed belt, in canvas with brass fittings, as a bandolier. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-236-1045-15A/Waidelich/CC-BY-SA 3.0)

duties at Mariupol under German 6th Army, and strength was increased to 4 battalions. Unlike the Eastern Legions, there was a minimal German cadre. The formation HQ comprised Dr Doll, a German medical officer, an interpreter, CSM, medical NCO and 7 other NCOs. A bn HQ had a German sergeant, a medical NCO and 2 other NCOs; and a sqn had just 2 German NCOs. The other officers, NCOs and all the troopers were Kalmyks, and the chief-of-staff, Doll's adviser, was a Kalmyk ranking as a major.

August 1943–April 1945

In July 1943 the KKK was at Krivoy Rog (now Kryvyi Rih, E Ukraine); and on 31 Aug 1943 the corps, now about 3,200 strong, was reorganized.

Now there were 25 numbered squadrons, each 100–150 strong with 3 platoons divided into 3 sections; plus 4 highly mobile 60-strong 'Pursuit Commandos' (*Jagdkomandos*). The KKK order of battle in Aug 1943 was as follows:

I Bn – 1st, 4th, 7th, 8th & 18th Cav Sqns; I Bn Pursuit Cdo
II Bn – 5th, 6th, 12th, 20th & 23rd Cav Sqns; II Bn Pursuit Cdo
III Bn – 3rd 14th, 17th, 21st & 25th Cav Sqns; III Bn Pursuit Cdo
IV Bn – 2nd, 13th, 19th, 22nd & 24th Cav Sqns; IV Bn Pursuit Cdo.

Meanwhile. the 9th–11th, 15th & 16th were designated Special Sqns (*Sonderschwadronen*), and sent back to Kalmykia, now under Soviet occupation, to conduct guerrilla warfare against the Red Army, but by Dec 1943 they had been wiped out. The bulk of the formation earned respect for protecting German troops at the Nikopol bridgehead on 2 December 1943.

In Jan 1944 the KKK transferred to Hungary, and by Feb had reached Lublin in occupied Poland. In June 1944 it took part in a large sweep against Polish Home Army guerrillas. In July it was in the front line in central Poland, performing well, but losing its respected commander 'Dr Doll' in battle. Another Abwehr agent, Obstlt Bergen (code-name 'Pipgorra'), took over command in Aug 1944, and the KKK was deployed in the Radom District of occupied Poland. In Dec 1944 the Corps, now 5,000 strong, was reorganized, once again, into 2 bdes each with 2 regiments.

On 8 Jan 1945 the SS attempted unsuccessfully to absorb the KKK into the Waffen-SS's Caucasian Armed Unit (see above). Oberst Raimund Hoerst then took over command; but that same month the Corps, in the path of the Soviet Oder offensive, was heavily defeated at Kielce, Poland. Reorganized as a reinforced Cavalry Regt with 3 bns in Feb 1945 at Neuhammer training camp, it was then transferred via German Silesia to Croatia, where it was attached to the Cossack Inf Bde of XV Cossack Cavalry Corps, part of Gen Vlasov's VS-KONR forces.[4] The Kalmyks retreated into Austria in Mar 1945, and surrendered in Apr to Tito's partisan army; those few who were captured by the British were handed over to the Red Army, and no doubt suffered the same brutal fate.

Uniforms & insignia

Kalmyk personnel wore German cavalry uniforms, including the steel helmet with decals removed; officers' and enlisted peakless and peaked field caps; field-grey, tropical and reed-green tunics and riding breeches; and black leather riding boots, with German cavalry equipment and sabres. These were worn alongside Soviet and Caucasian items, such as *papakha* and *kubanka* fleece caps, *sharovary* breeches and *shashqa* swords. German cadre personnel retained their German uniforms and equipment.

Kalmyks wore standard German Army rank insignia, comprising officers', NCOs' and men's shoulder straps and left sleeve insignia. Rank titles were in either Russian (the language of command), German, or Kalmyk; the senior officer rank was *mayor*. From Aug 1942 the Kalmyks wore the German Army's eagle national emblem on the cap and above the right breast pocket, and the German circular cockade was worn on appropriate headgear. German cavalry golden-yellow branch-colour was displayed in all regulation positions.

4 See MAA 503, *Hitler's Russian & Cossack Allies 1941–45*

The German commander of the Kalmyk Cavalry Corps (left) congratulates cavalrymen at a medal-award ceremony, 1944. (The field officer is unidentified, but if the photo dates from the early months of the year this may be the Abwehr agent 'Dr Otto Doll' – Othmar Rudolf Vrba.) All these men wear black lambswool *kubanka* caps with silver-grey machine-woven eagle badges with or without metal cockades. The German NCO who has just been decorated with the Iron Cross 2nd Class also displays the M1936 Marksmanship Lanyard from his right shoulder for this parade occasion.
The Kalmyk NCO (far right) displays two classes of the Eastern People's Decoration. (Tchakov Collection)

An arm patch was manufactured in late 1944, to be worn midway down the right upper sleeve, but it was not issued to troops. It comprised a light-blue disc surrounded by a yellow ring and light-brown outer piping, bearing an elaborate cruciform design in light brown. The yellow ring bore light-brown titles, above in Mongolian Cyrillic script ('DOKTOR DOLLIN KHAL'MG MOERTA TSARG'), and below in German (' KALMUKEN VERBAND DR DOLL').

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Borsarello, J.F. & Palinckx, W., *Wehrmacht & SS: Caucasian, Moslem, Asian Troops* (Heimdal; Bayeux, 2007)

Drobyazko, C. & Karashuk, A., *Vostochnye legionyi I kazach'icvhasti v Vermachte* (ACT; Moscow, 1999)

Hoffmann, Joachim, *Deutsche und Kalmyken 1942 bis 1945* (Rombach; Freiburg, 1973)

Hoffmann, Joachim, *Kaukasien 1942/3* (Rombach; Freiburg, 1991)

Hoffmann, Joachim, *Die Ostlegionen 1941 – 1943* (Rombach; Freiburg, 1981)

Muñoz, Antonio J. (ed), *The East Came West – Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist Volunteers in the German Armed Forces 1941–1945* (Axis Europa Books; New York, 2001)

Chart 1: Arm shields of the Eastern Legions, August 1942–8 May 1945

Turkestan Legion
Sept 1942–May 1945

Turkestan Legion
Sept 1943–mid-1944

Turkestan Legion
mid-1944–May 1945

Azerbaijan Legion
Aug 1942–Dec 1943

Azerbaijan Legion
Dec 1943–May 1945

Georgian Legion
Aug 1942–May 1945

Armenian Legion
Aug 1942–May 1945

N. Caucasus Legion
Aug 1942–Jan 1943

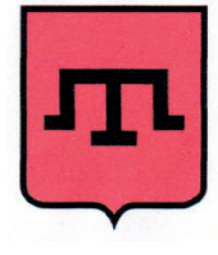
N. Caucasus Legion
Jan 1943–May 1945

Volga-Tatar Legion
1942–43

Volga-Tatar Legion
1943–44

Volga Tatar Legion
1944–45

Crimean Tatar Auxiliary Police
Aug 1942–Mar 1944

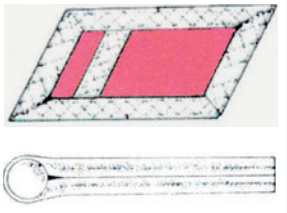
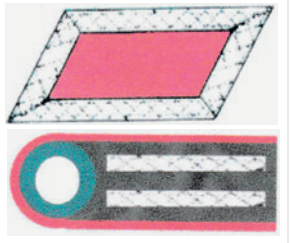
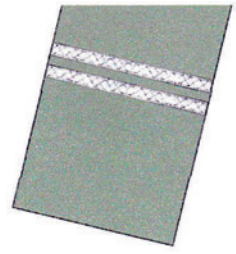
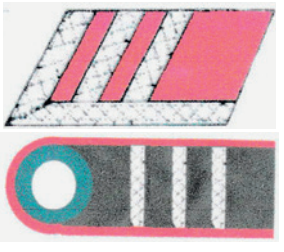
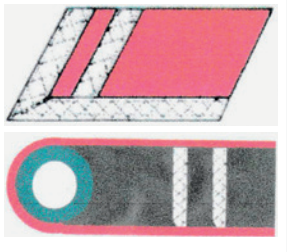
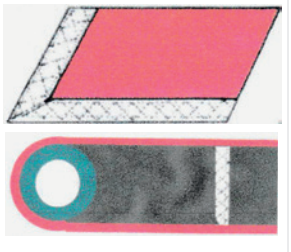
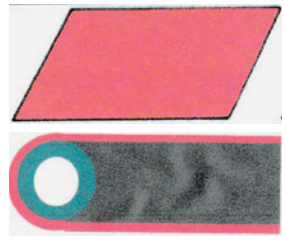


Crimean Tatar Waffen-SS
Mar 1944–May 1945

Kalmyk Cav Unit
late 1944–Apr 1945

An Azerbaijan Legion *Gruppenführer* relaxes with a magazine, 1943. The corporal's field cap has entirely German insignia, but his field grey shoulder strap, piped with this Legion's light green and bearing two silver-braid bars, accords with Eastern Legion regulations of April 1942. He displays on his left sleeve the Azerbaijan Legion's M1942 arm shield. (Tchakov Collection).

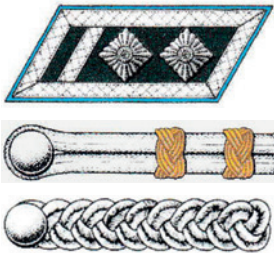
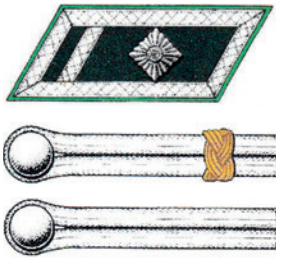
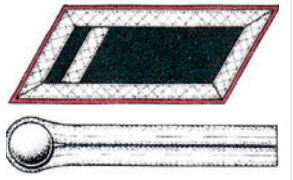
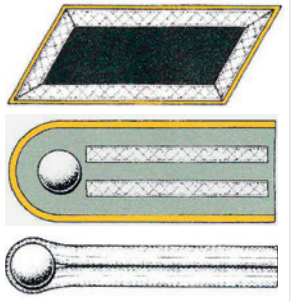
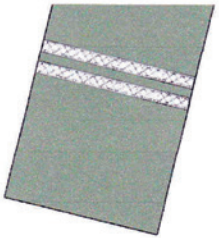
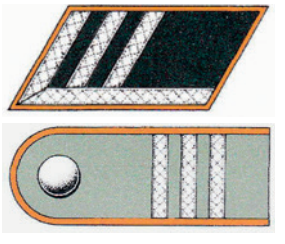
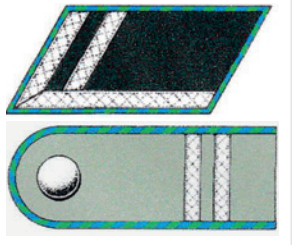
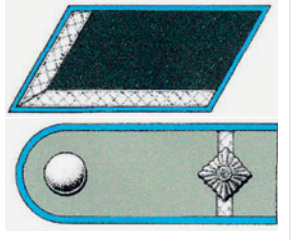
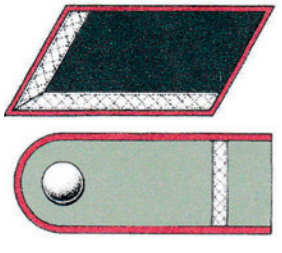
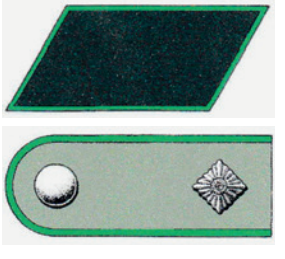
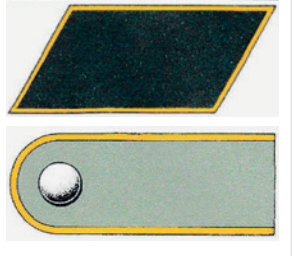
Chart 2: Rank insignia (Type 1) of the Eastern Legions, 24 April–16 November 1942

			
Kompanieführer/Komandir roty *(Lieut)*	Stellvertretender Kompanieführer/ Pomoshchnik komandir roty (*2/Lieut*) (1)	Zugführer/ Komandir vzvoda/ (*Colour Sgt*)	Hauptfeldwebel/ Khaupt-Fel'dfebel' (*Co Sgt-Maj*) (2)
			
Stellvertretender Zugführer/ Pomoshchnik Komandir vzvoda (*Sgt*)	Gruppenführer/ Komandir otdeleniya/ (*Corpl*)	Stellvertretender Gruppenführer/ Pomoshchnik komandir otdeleniya (*L/Corpl*)	Legionär/Legioner (*Pte*)

Notes: (1). Rank and insignia introduced 2 June 1942.
(2) Appointment might be held by Col Sgts, Sgts or Corpls.
Collar patches: Red cloth, with German silver M1935 or mouse-grey M1940 NCO braid, & silver-plated stars.
Shoulder straps: Officers (Lieut, 2/Lieut) had narrow bright aluminium wire *Sonderführer* shoulder straps with a silver-plated button and gold wire knot – see Chart 3. NCOs and men had dark bluish-green cloth rounded shoulder straps piped red, with a silver-plated button and German NCO braid.
Rank titles: German positional titles/Russian positional titles, above (*British Army equivalents*).

Thionville, northern France, 1943: a group of Turkestan legionaries of the 782nd Inf Bn, including a visible mix of European and Asian ethnic features. The internal breast pockets of the first, second and fourth men in the front rank immediately identify re-use of the old Royal Netherlands Army tunic, with the blueish-green collar patches of November 1942 regulations piped light blue.(Bundesarchiv, Bild 1011-295-1560-21 / Müller, Karl / CC-BY-SA 3.0)

Chart 3: Rank insignia (Type 2) of the Eastern Legions, 17 November 1942–17 March 1944

			
Bataillonsführer/Mayor (*Major*) (*Maj*) Turkestan (1) (2)	Kompanieführer/ Kapitan/Hauptmann (*Capt*) Azerbaijan (2)	Stellvertretender Kompanieführer/ Poruchik/*Oberleutnant* (*Lieut*) Georgia	Zugführer/Podporuchik/*Leutnant* (*2nd Lieut*) Armenia (2)
			
Khaupt-Fel'dfebel'/*Hauptfeldwebel* (*Company Sgt-Maj*) (3)	Stellvertretender Zugführer/ Fel'dfebel'/*Feldwebel* (*Sgt*) North Caucasus	Gruppenführer/ Unter-ofitser/Unteroffizier (*Corpl*) Volga-Tatars	Ober-Yefreytor Obergefreiter (*Senior L/Cpl*) Turkestan (4)
			
Stellvertretender Gruppenführer/ Yefreytor/Gefreiter (*L/Cpl*) Georgia	Ober-Legioner. Oberlegionär (*Sen. Pte*) Azerbaijan (4)	Legionär/Legioner (*Pte*) Armenia Legion illustrated	

Notes: (1) Rank created but not held.
(2) Lower strap introduced 15 Sept 1943.
(3) Appointment might be held 17 Nov 1942 by 2/Lieuts, Sgts or Corpls; from 29 May 1943 by Sgts orCorpls only.
(4) Ranks introduced 1 Jan 1944, with German silver-plated stars.
Collar patches: 17 Nov 1942: dark bluish-green cloth piped in second- pattern legion colour, with German silver NCO braid and silver-plated stars.
Officers' shoulder straps: Narrow bright flat aluminium wire *Sonderführer* shoulder straps with a silver-plated button and gold wire knot; from 29 May 1943, plaited or flat *Sonderführer* shoulder straps without gold knot.
NCOs and men's shoulder straps: Rounded field-grey cloth shoulder straps piped in second-pattern legion colour, with German silver NCO braid.
Rank titles: German positional titles (for Russian equivalents,see Chart 2). From 29 May 1943: Russian rank titles/German rank titles (*British Army equivalents*).

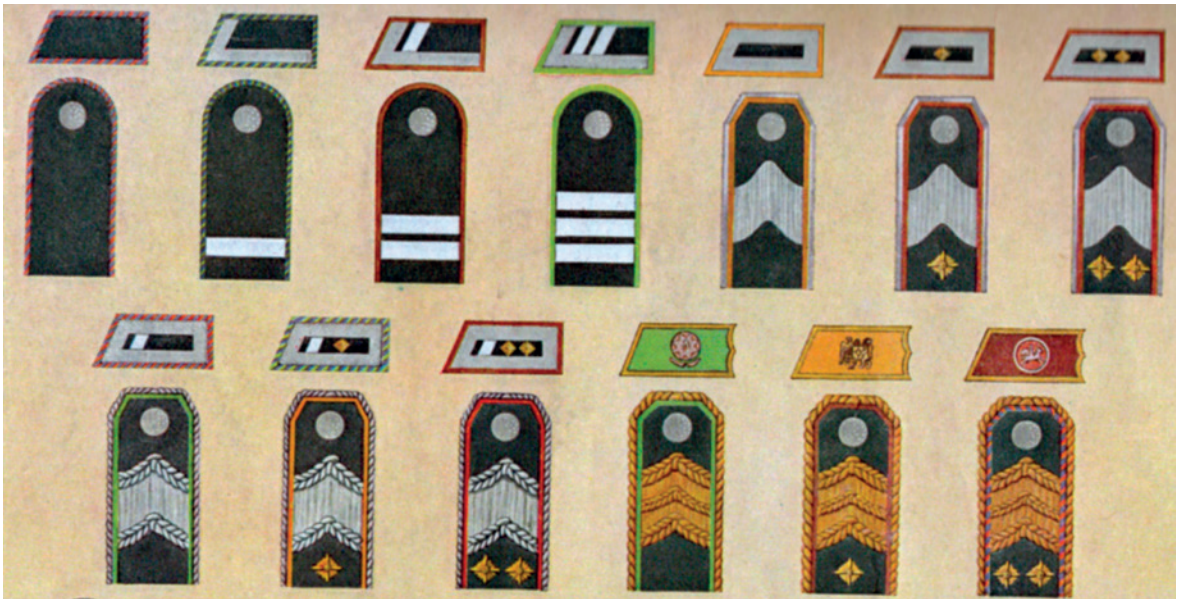


Chart 4: Rank insignia of the Eastern Legions, 18 March 1944–8 May 1945

Officers wore German M1935 silver aluminium wire (service) or M1940 mouse-grey aluminium wire (field) shoulder straps, with branch-colour cloth underlay, and gold-plated 4-point rank stars. NCOs and men wore M1935 dark bluish-green or M1940 field-grey cloth round-ended shoulder straps, with branch-colour piping, M1935 silver or M1940 mouse-grey braid edging, and for junior ranks left upper-sleeve chevrons point down, or a silver star.

Russian rank title	German rank title	Rank insignia	British equiv (no equiv)
Mayor	Major	Plaited wire strap, branch underlay	Major
Kapitan	Hauptmann	Flat wire strap, 2 gold stars, branch underlay	Capt
Poruchik	Oberleutnant	Flat wire strap, 1 gold star, branch underlay	Lieut
Podporuchik	Leutnant	Flat wire strap, branch underlay	2/Lieut
Khaupt-Fel'dfebel' (1)	Hauptfeldwebel	2 braid rings on lower sleeves	WO II (CSM)
Ober-Fel'dfebel' (2)	Oberfeldwebel	Shoulder strap: 2 silver stars, braid edging, branch piping	Colour Sgt
Feld'febel'	Feldwebel	Shoulder strap: 1 silver star, braid edging, branch piping	Sgt
Unter-ofitser	Unteroffizier	Shoulder strap: braid edging except on outer end, branch piping.	Corpl
Ober-Yefreytor	Obergefreiter	Shoulder strap: branch piping 2 left-sleeve chevrons	*(Sen L/Corpl)*
Yefreytor	Gefreiter	Shoulder strap: branch piping 1 left-sleeve chevron	L/Corpl
Ober-Strelok (3)	Oberschütze	Shoulder strap: branch piping Left-sleeve star	*(Sen Pte)*
Dobrovolets (3)	Freiwilliger	Shoulder strap: branch piping	Pte

Notes:
(1) Appointment held by an *Ober-Fel'dfebel'* or *Fel'dfebel'.*
(2) Introduced 15 June 1944.
(3) Rank titles introduced 15 June 1944.

ABOVE
A section of the plate illustrating proposed M1943 (type 2) Eastern Legions' rank insignia from *Signal* magazine, Dec 1943:
(Row 1) First 5 collar patches were issued as M1942 (type 2); last 2 were not made.
(Row 2) First 4 shoulder straps issued as M1942 (type 2); last 3 not made.
(Row 3) First collar patch issued as M1942 (type 2); last 5 not made.
(Row 4) None of these shoulder straps were made. (Author's collection)

INDEX

Figures in **bold** refer to illustrations and their captions.

1st Caucasian Air Force Field Bn 5, **A3(6–7)**
1st East Muslim SS Regt 16
1st Pz Army 4, 44–45
162 Turkestan Inf Div 14
162nd (Turkic) Inf Div 16
162nd Inf Div HQ 15–16
162nd Infantry Division Training Staff 9–10, 12, 14
450th Reinforced Turkestan Inf Bn 9
1607 Gren Regt 14, 15

Albania 50
arm shields **4**, **10**, 18, **B2(10–11)**, **C(18–19)**, 22, 22–23, **D1(24–25)**, 29, **30**, **31**, 33, **33**, 36, **E3(36–37)**, **38**, 41–42, **41**, **F3(42–43)**, 44, **G2–3(48–49)**, 53–54, **60**
Armenian Legion **4**, 9, **33**, 36, **E(36–37)**, **38**, 39, **60**
  deployment 47, 48, 50, 51
Army Group 'A' 44
Army Group 'B' 45–46
Army Group South 44
Azerbaijan Legion 6, 9, **10**, **21**, **23**, 30–33, **33**
  deployment 46, **46**, **47**, 48, 50, **50**, 51
  insignia **10**, **31**, 33, **47**, **60**
  uniforms **18**, **C(18–19)**, **47**, **50**

Balkans, the 50
Baumhauer, Maj Dr Friedrich 5
Belarus 48
Belgium 50
Bergmann special unit 4–5, **5**, 6, **A(6–7)**

Caucasian Armed SS Unit 14
Caucasian Armed Unit 17, 24, 58
Caucasian Muslim Legion 9, 30
Caucasus campaign 4–6, **A(6–7)**, 12, 44–48
Caucasus Special HQ 6
Channel Islands **D2(24–25)**, **33**, 50
cockades 22, **D2(24–25)**, 29, 33, **33**, 35, 44, **G1–2(48–49)**
command structure 9
contribution 8
Crimea, the 5, **A2(6–7)**, 48, 51–52
Crimean Tatar forces 51–52
  Auxiliary Police 53–54, **60**
  deployment 54
  insignia **52**, 53, 54, **60**
  Tatar Self-Defence **52**, 53, **53**, **54**, **H1(54–55)**
  uniforms **52**, 53–54, **53**, 54, **H1–2(54–55)**
  village militia 52–53
  Waffen-SS 54, **H2(54–55)**, 56, **60**
Croatia 50, 51

East Muslim SS Regt 14
East Turkestan Unit 24
East Turkic Armed Unit 16–17, **C3(18–19)**
Eastern Legion Inf Bns 9
Eastern Legions Command 9
Eastern Legions Formation HQ 9
Einsatzgruppe D 53
equipment **A1(6–7)**, 17–18, **C1(18–19)**, **D2(24–25)**, **33**

formation 8, 9
formations 14
France 15, **47**, 48, 50, **61**

Georgian Legion 9, **D(24–25)**, 33–36, **33**, **35**, **60**
  deployment 47, 48, 50, 51
Greece 50
Guernsey **D2(24–25)**, 50

'Harun-el Raschid', SS-Stubaf 17
headgear 17
  field caps **4**, 6, **A3(6–7)**, **8**, **9**, **12**, **15**, **16**, **18**, **C1–2(18–19)**, **20**, 22, **D2(24–25)** , **26**, **27**, **34**, **E3(36–37)**, **46**, **47**, **G1–2(48–49)**, **52**, **53**, 54, **60**
  helmets **B3(10–11)**, **22**, **23**, **34**, **F3(42–43)**, **G3(48–49)**, **50**
  kubanka lambswool cap **A1(6–7)**, **BI(10–11)**, **F1(42–43)**
  Latvian field cap **54**
  mountain troop cap **5**
  officer's service cap **35**, **41**
  papakha hat **D3(24–25)**
  Schirmmütze service cap **31**
Hellmich, GenLt Heinz **8**, **15**
Hitler, Adolf 14, 47
Hungary 58

identifying colours 22, **23**, 29, 35–36, **38**
insignia **4**, **8**, **16**, 22–23
  Armenian Legion **E3(36–37)**, 36, 38, **38**
  Azerbaijan Legion **10**, **C2(18–19)** , **23**, **31**, 33, **47**, **60**
  Bergmann special unit **5**, **A(6–7)**
  Crimean Tatar forces **52**, 53, 54
  Georgian Legion **D1(24–25)**, **33**, 35–36
  Kalmyk forces **56**
  North Caucasus Legion 41–42, **41**, **F2–3 (42–43)**
  Turkestan Legion **B(10–11)**, 29, **60**
  Volga-Tatar Legion 44, **45**
Intelligence Operation 'Tiger B' 5–6
Italy 16, 17, 50

Kalmyk forces **59**
  deployment 56–58
  insignia **56**, 58–59, **60**
  uniforms **H3(54–55)**, **56**, **57**, 58
Köstring, Gen Ernst-August 9

Loladza, Shalva **35**

Mayer-Mader, Maj 9, 16
medals 23–24, **23**
Meyer-Mader, Maj Andreas 6
mountain infantry 4
Muslim clerics **10**, **B2(10–11)**, 12–13
Muslim SS-Div 'New Turkestan' 16

NCOs **4**, **10**, **B3(10–11)**, **12**, 17, 18, **C2(18–19)**, **21**, **26**, **27**, **31**, **E1(36–37)**, **F3(42–43)**, **44**, **47**, **G1(48–49)**, **59**, **60**
Netherlands, the 50, 51
Niedermayer, GenMaj Oskar Dr Ritter von 10
Normandy landings 15
North Caucasian Legion 9
North Caucasus Legion 30, 38–42, **41**, **F(42–43)**, **60**
  deployment 47, 48, 50, 51

Oberländer, Oblt Theodor 4, 5
Oder Front 51
officers **A2–3(6–7)**, **BI(10–11)** , 17, 18, **18**, **C2(18–19)**, 22, **D1(24–25)**, **D1(24–25)**, **D3(24–25)**, **27**, **31**, **35**, **E3(36–37)**, **41**, **F1(42–43)** , **46**, **G2(48–49)**
Operation 'Barbarossa' 8
Operation 'Blue' 44
Operation 'Brunswick' 44
Operation Edelweiß 44
Operation 'Grey 'Heron' 45–46
Operation 'Zeppelin' 4

Perekop peninsula 5
Poland 5, 15, 48, **50**, 58

rank insignia **4**, 6, **A(6–7)**, **B3(10–11)**, **12**, 18, **18**, **C2(18–19)**, 20–21, **21**, **26**, **30**, **31**, **33**, **E(36–37)**, **38**, **41**, **F2(42–43)**, **44**, **47**, **G(48–49)**, 58–59, **61–63**
Russia 48

Schellenburg, SS-Brigaf Walther 6
Serbia 50
Slovakia 48
Slovenia 51
Special Unit 'Highlander' 4
sub-units 13, 22
surrender 16, 17, 51

Tatar Mtn Regt 14
Theurmann, SS-Col of Reserve Arved 17
training 9–10, 12, **12**
Turkestan Legion **8**, 9, **12**, 13, 26–30, **27**
  deployment 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, **61**
  insignia **B(10–11)**, 29, **60**
  uniforms **B(10–11)**, **20**, **26**, **27**, **30**, **61**
Turkestan-Caucasian-Muslim Legion 6, 9

Ukraine **5**, **13**, **15**, 48
uniforms **6**, **13**, 17–18
  Armenian Legion **E(36–37)**
  Azerbaijan Legion **18**, **C(18–19)**, **47**, **50**
  Bergmann special unit **5**, **6**, **A(6–7)**
  captured **12**, 17, **20**, **61**
  Crimean Tatar forces **52**, 53–54, **53**, 54, **H1–2(54–55)**
  fatigue **9**
  Georgian Legion **D(24–25)**, **33**, **35**
  German cadre 18
  greatcoats **22**, **G3(48–49)**, **52**, **H1(54–55)**, **57**
  Kalmyk forces **H3(54–55)**, **56**, **57**, 58
  Luftwaffe **A3(6–7)**
  mountain troops **A2(6–7)**
  North Caucasus Legion **F(42–43)**
  tropical **8**, **B3(10–11)**, **15**, **C2(18–19)**
  tunics **4**, **5**, **A1(6–7)**, **10**, **16**, **20**, **23**, **26**, **27**, **31**, **33**, **E1(36–37)**, **E3(36–37)**, **F(42–43)**, **44**, **45**, **47**, **G1–2(48–49)**, **H3(54–55)**, **61**
  Turkestan Legion **B(10–11)**, **20**, **26**, **27**, **30**, **61**
  Volga-Tatar Legion **15**, **23**, **44**, **45**, **G(48–49)**
  Waffen-SS **C3(18–19)**, 24, 54, **H2(54–55)**
unit re-assignment 13

Volga-Tatar Legion 9, **15**, **22**, 42, 44, **60**
  deployment 48, 50, 51
  uniforms **15**, **23**, **44**, **45**, **G(48–49)**
volunteer auxiliaries 8
Volunteer Depot Division 14, 15, 50

Waffen-SS 14, 16, **C3(18–19)**, 24, 58
  Crimean Tatar forces 54, **H2(54–55)**, 56, **60**
Wagner, GenMaj Edouard 8
Warsaw Uprising **6**, 16–17, 48, **50**
weapons
  bayonets 17, **C1(18–19)**
  captured **22**, **31**, **33**, **E1(36–37)**, **45**, **52**, **53**, **H1(54–55)**
  grenades **F2(42–43)**
  light mortar **8**
  machine guns **C3(18–19)**, **31**, **33**, **E2(36–37)**, **50**
  pistols **A2(6–7)**, **C3(18–19)**, **31**
  rifles **A1(6–7)**, **22**, **33**, **E2(36–37)**, **38**, **45**, **52**, **53**, **H1(54–55)**
  sub-machine guns **B3(10–11)**, 17, **E1(36–37)**
Western Front, transfer to 15–16

XV Cossack Cav Corps 5

OSPREY PUBLISHING
Bloomsbury Publishing plc
PO Box 883, Oxford, OX1 9PL, UK
1385 Broadway, Fifth Floor, New York, NY 10018, USA
E-mail: info@ospreypublishing.com
www.ospreypublishing.com

OSPREY is a trademark of Osprey Publishing Ltd

First published in Great Britain in 2020
This electronic edition published in 2020 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

© Osprey Publishing Ltd 2020

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system,without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: PB 9781472839541; eBook: 9781472839558; ePDF: 9781472839527; XML: 9781472839534

Editor: Martin Windrow
Index by Alan Rutter
Typeset by PDQ Digital Media Solutions, Bungay, UK

Osprey Publishing supports the Woodland Trust, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity.

To find out more about our authors and books, visit **www.ospreypublishing.com**. Here you will find extracts, author interviews, details of forthcoming events, and the option to sign up for our newsletter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nigel Thomas wishes to thank the correspondents whose interest, kindness and patience have contributed so much to this book: Barbara Allen, Christopher Harrod, Dr Marc Landry, Darko Pavlović, and especially Ventsislav Tchakov. He would also like to acknowledge the work of John Angolia, Carlos Caballero Jurado, Brian L. Davis, David Littlejohn, Andrew Mollo, Adolf Schlicht, Pierre C. T. Verheye, and in particular that of Antonio J. Muñoz. As always, great thanks are due to his wife Heather and his sons Alexander and Dominick for their tireless encouragement and support.
For further information on Nigel Thomas please log on to his website nt-associates.com.

EDITOR'S NOTE

For reasons of space, most of this text departs from normal house style by using abbreviations of e.g. months of the year, unit designations and numbers below 10. Abbreviated dates are in British style i.e. day, month, year.
In the **battle-order** entries, 'r.' means 'raised' and the symbol '>' indicates 'became'. For example, the entry:
'787 Turkestan Inf Bn (r. Legionowo, Poland, 21.12.1942); Netherlands (15.3.1943); > IV/461 Fort Gren Regt, 347 Inf Div (Netherlands, 14.1.1944); > 787 Turkestan Inf Bn (Katwijk, Netherlands, 8.1944); Ijmuiden, Netherlands, (3.1945); surrendered (4.1945)'
means that 787th Infantry Battalion of the Turkestan Legion was raised at Legionowo, Poland on 21 Dec 1942; is known to have been in the Netherlands from 15 Mar 1943: was redesignated IV Battalion/461 Fortress Infantry Regiment as a unit of the German 347th Infantry Division on 14 Jan 1944; reverted to the designation 787th Turkestan Infantry Battalion at Katwijk in Aug 1944; was at Ijmuiden in Mar 1945; and surrendered in Apr 1945.

Front cover: A Turkestan Legion company sergeant-major – note two silver braid rings on outer surface of forearm – hands a Karabiner 98k rifle to a recruit, 1943. The CSM wears German Army insignia on his black lambswool *kubanka* cap, and the Eastern People's rank insignia of *Gruppenführer* (see Chart 3) on apparently non-standard collar patches in the Legion's initial light blue distinctive colour. The recruits wear no cap insignia, and have German Army collar braids. (Tchakov Collection)

Abbreviations used in text and battle-order tables	
Armd	Armoured
Arty	Artillery
Bde	Brigade
Bn	Battalion
Cav	Cavalry
Co	Company
Col	Column
Cos	Companies
Div	Division/al
Eng	Engineer
Fort	Fortress (infantry)
Gren	Grenadier (infantry)
Inf	Infantry
Lt	Light
Mot	Motorized
Mtn	Mountain
Ptn	Platoon
Pz	Panzer (armoured)
r.	raised
Regt	Regiment
Sigs	Signals
Sqn	Squadron
Vol	Volunteer

Acronyms	
Abwehr	German Army intelligence service
AK	Polish Home Army
ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
CSM	company sergeant-major
KKK	Kalmyk Cavalry Corps
MG	machine gun
MP	sub-machine gun (German)
MRNC	Mountain Republic of North Caucasus
OKH	German Army High Command
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NKVD	Soviet security service
POW	prisoner-of-war
ROA	Russian Liberation Army
RSHA	SS Security Head Office
RSFS	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SMG	sub-machine gun
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
VS-KONR	Gen Vlasov's Russian collaborationist armed forces